

North Hertfordshire District Council: Masterplanning Guidance for Strategic Housing Sites and Significant Development: February 2021

1 North Hertfordshire Masterplan Requirements

- 1.1 Policy SP9 Design & Sustainability is the key strategic policy in the plan to support place-making and design at a strategic scale. The policy requires Strategic Masterplans to be produced for all the Strategic Housing Sites and significant development.
- 1.2 The supporting text acknowledges that the policy has to apply to a wide range of developments in terms of scale, quantum and complexity and any masterplan requirements need to be tailored on a case-by-case basis and identify a proportionate level of masterplan detail to secure design quality. In this respect the design objectives and masterplan requirements of the policy should act as a starting point in scoping out design issues and masterplan material required.
- 1.3 The policy sets out a clear set of design criteria that read across to NPPF, the National Design Guide and the emerging National Model Design Code.
- 1.4 The policy also sets out 'typical' masterplan requirements for Strategic Masterplans for large scale development. This checklist should provide the starting point for scoping out masterplanning requirements for smaller but still significant development in the context of site-specific planning and design issues.
- 1.5 The following sections sets out how policy SP9 can be effectively implemented in practice.
- 1.6 The Strategic Masterplan requirements of Policy SP9 should form the starting point for identifying on a case-by-case basis what information is required. A proportionate approach will be required that takes into account the scale, quantum and complexity of the site, likely form of delivery and the planning and design issues to be resolved.

2 Project Management & Governance



Figure 1 Project Management Structure

Strategic Sites Steering Group

- 2.1 The role of the Strategic Sites Steering Group would be to support the effective implementation and application of Policy SP9 Design & Sustainability to the Strategic Housing Site Policies SP14-SP19 and other significant development sites as they transition from emerging allocations to the masterplanning and planning application process.
- 2.2 The group will be collectively responsible for applying and implementing Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability in terms of the screening of applicable sites, scoping masterplan requirements, briefs and project plans and establishing and resourcing when required project specific working groups.
- 2.3 A Strategic Sites Steering Group formed by senior planning policy and development management officers will be established to undertake the following roles.

- To identify development proposals which constitute significant development and identify the master planning and design requirements.
- To scope, establish and agree initial site specific masterplan briefs
- To establish project specific working groups where required and organise the initial 'Inception Meeting'.
- Co-ordinate masterplan activity and delivery with landowners and key stakeholders
- Provide elected member briefings when required
- Progress reports to and resolve strategic/showstopper issues with the Project Board

Project Working Groups

- 2.4 These would be established as required to provide a focused and project specific group of district and county officers to drive forward and progress masterplans with the landowner team.
- 2.5 A dedicated planning officer would act as project lead/manager. The project manager would be the day-to-day contact on the project They would prepare a clear masterplan brief and project plan with wider input from other officers and the landowner team. They would be responsible co-ordinating project activity and for ensuring milestones are met and progress is made within agreed timescales.
- 2.6 The group/s would be responsible for the following.
- Ensure national and local plan policy requirements are met at a project specific level
 - Collectively input and shape the masterplan proposals to secure an inter-disciplinary and integrated approach
 - Provide continuous design quality assessment at different scales
 - Co-ordinate technical and design advice from county and district councils and statutory agencies
 - Co-ordinate input from community liaison officers, ward councillors and the local community to ensure effective local community engagement
 - Co-ordinate input from wider stakeholders
 - Resolve issues and drive forward delivery and quality place-making/design in accordance with the masterplan brief and project plan.
 - Support the masterplan process and agree/sign off outputs
 - Provide progress reports to Steering Group
 - Provide ward member briefings when required
 - Seek Council approval when required

Stakeholder & Community Engagement

- 2.7 It is proposed to engage stakeholders through at least 1 focused workshop event. The Council will assist landowners in undertaking a stakeholder mapping exercise to ensure all relevant groups are consulted. It is expected at least one public engagement event is undertaken to inform the production of the Strategic Masterplan. The nature and timing of engagement will be agreed on a project-by-project basis to respond to the individual project needs.

Strategic Sites Project Board

- 2.8 In order for the council to effectively and pro-actively shape masterplan proposals a Strategic Sites Project Board will be established with Senior Leadership from the Council.

- 2.9 The advisory role of the group would be to:

- Inform place specific visions for the Strategic Housing sites that support sustainable communities.
- Provide corporate oversight and strategic direction to the implementation of strategic site project delivery.
- Ensure consistency of corporate direction and decision-making from the strategic to the site-specific and over time;
- Ensure effective use of and sufficient resources to support project delivery
- Receive and consider progress reports and recommendations for approval of Strategic Masterplan documents
- Agree approval process and timing for Strategic Masterplans
- Help with the resolution and or co-ordination of strategic issues, including identification and prioritisation of green, social and physical infrastructure and s106 obligations.

PPAs

- 2.10 Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) are an effective and commonly used project management tool for large - scale projects and planning applications. Indeed, they have become mainstreamed into planning practice and support decision-making on large-scale and complex sites. They provide a framework within which parties come together to agree how they are going to take a development proposals through the planning process to

- Support collaborative and integrated working
- Establish the scope and task and clarity on the issues to resolve
- Provide planning certainty
- Increase the speed of decision-making
- Support better quality development.

2.11 The Council would normally expect a PPA to be used to support the preparation of Strategic Masterplans and significant development planning applications. The PPA would be prepared at the initial Inception Meeting and based on the stages of masterplanning in the following section.

3 North Hertfordshire Masterplanning Process

3.1 The following section sets out the 10 key stages of a recommended collaborative masterplan process.

3.2 The Strategic Masterplan process seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Collaborative and inter-disciplinary working to support sustainable integrated design and meet Council Corporate objectives
- A clear site-specific vision and objectives that are locally distinctive and guide the implementation of development over a long period of time in phases
- Provide a common design framework to secure design quality and allow flexibility of implementation
- Provide a framework within which to develop further design instruction at subsequent stages of the project (through outline applications, pre-commencement conditions and reserved matters)
- Create an integrated evidence base and determine development capacity
- Help to co-ordinate cross boundary working where required.
- Support the co-ordination and integration of development
- Identify and co-ordinate what green, social and physical infrastructure is required (when at what cost and funding)
- Ensure effective community engagement, including parish councils and build a sense of community ownership
- Support consultation with stakeholders and their effective input
- Support a financial viability appraisal and help parties to understand cashflow issues and funding gaps
- Provide evidence to provide a realistic assessment of delivery through housing trajectory
- Assist in assessing and determining planning applications (in addition to site specific and other policies)
- Help inform, support and co-ordinate funding, phasing and delivery requirements
- Provide planning certainty and speed up planning application process/delivery through frontloading and early resolution of issues.
- Enable the Council to endorse the Strategic Masterplan as a material consideration or if required SPD (pursuant to SP9 or site-specific policy)

Stage 1

- **Project Initiation**

- SSSG to meet and prepare and agree a masterplan brief of masterplan requirements and Council expectations.

Stage 2

- **Inception Meeting**

- Council officer team SSWG to meet with applicant team and agree masterplan brief and project plan to steer the masterplan preparation and process. This meeting would establish the PPA if used.

Stage 3

- **Baseline Report**

- SSWG to agree baseline report confirming evidence base, constraints and opportunities and vision and place-making objectives

Stage 4

- **Strategic Masterplan Options**

- Stakeholder Workshop
- Preparation of Masterplan Options

Stage 5

- **Design Review**

- Collaborative design workshop

Stage 6

- **Preferred Option**

- Agreement of Preferred option
- Member Briefing

Stage 7

- **Draft Strategic Masterplan**

- Stakeholder Workshop

Stage 8

- **Public Consultation**

- A public consultation exhibition or workshop/drop in event

Stage 9

- **Final Strategic Masterplan**

- After public and stakeholder consultation on the draft a final version would be agreed by the SSWG

Stage 10

- **Approval of Strategic Masterplan**

- A report would be prepared for Cabinet (or other agreed approval body) to recommend the Strategic Masterplan for formal Council approval.

- 3.3 In practice masterplanning is not a strictly sequential process or a one-size-fits all. Rather it is iterative with the evolution of evidence and design testing throughout the masterplan development. However, these are the broad stages that are widely recognised by good practice and should be used to tailor the approach to the project needs.
- 3.4 The final masterplan report should broadly contain the following information which relates to the requirements of Policy SP9 Design & Sustainability.

Baseline Summary- Understanding the Place with relevant evidence base studies
Vision and Place-making Objectives and how the community and stakeholders shaped these
Masterplan Framework plan and explanatory text identifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicative Block Structure and land uses (community facilities) • Green infrastructure (location, configuration and type) • Movement Framework (key access points, street network, on and off site pedestrian and cycle routes) • Urban Design Framework (on a block structure plan gateways, landmarks, frontages, edges, interfaces and focal points, including key areas of proposed public realm)
Green Infrastructure Framework Plan and explanatory text identifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key green spaces, location and function • Recreational/POS • Strategic Suds • Play • Allotments • Pedestrian and cycle routes • Off-site pedestrian and cycle connections • Structural Landscaping/Tree Planting • Habitat to be retained/enhanced • Biodiversity Net Gain
Movement Framework Plan and explanatory text identifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-site highway improvements • Key access junctions • Primary Route • Secondary Routes • Pedestrian and cycle routes/crossings on and off site (connections to PROW network) • Connections to key destinations • Bus accessibility/circulation
Urban Design Framework Plan and explanatory text identifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development block structure • Density • Heights • Gateways

- Landmarks
- Focal points
- Key frontages
- Vistas and key views
- Edges and Interfaces
- Public Spaces

Design Principles document to a) explain how an understanding of existing character in the landscape, townscape, community and architecture has informed the Masterplan Framework and b) to set out key design principles for the buildings, streets and spaces and c) how a diverse and distinctive range of housing will be provided to meet the differing needs of the population

Sustainability & Energy Framework identifying site wide and building scale opportunities and aspirations to reduce carbon emissions through potential use of renewable technologies, energy efficiency standards, sustainable transport, supporting living locally and reducing the need to travel by car, water efficiency, addressing light, noise and air pollution, waste management enhancing biodiversity and tree-planting.

Housing Need and Diversification

Housing Mix, type and tenure, AH, specialist housing, self-build proposals

Illustrative Layout- indicating further detail and design resolution on block and building typologies, street design, green space and public realm design to evidence how a high-quality design and layout can be achieved within the parameters and principles agreed in the Masterplan Framework

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

This should identify the strategic infrastructure requirements for the following items, the cost and when and where it is required in plan and written form.