

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: LAND TO THE NORTH OF THE GRANGE (LG1) STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK**

REPORT OF: IAN FULLSTONE, SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR CHRIS HINCHLIFF, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST / SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report asks Cabinet to positively recommend the approval of the Strategic Masterplan Framework for land to the north of Letchworth Garden City to Full Council. This site is allocated for development in the Council's adopted Local Plan (Site LG1, Policy SP15) as a strategic site for approximately 900 homes and supporting infrastructure.

The policies of the Local Plan require the preparation of a masterplan for this site. A masterplan has been produced by the applicant team working with Council officers and advisors. This has followed approved guidance and procedures. The draft masterplan has been subject to public consultation. The masterplan provides an appropriate framework for the future planning and development of this strategic site.

This report and its considerations are subject to a positive referral by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 July 2024.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That, subject to referral by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 July 2024, the Strategic Masterplan Framework for Land to the North of the Grange (LG1), attached at Appendix A, is approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. To facilitate the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan. To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1. None. Officers and the Council's Project Board consider that the Strategic Masterplan Framework (hereafter 'masterplan') has been appropriately prepared in accordance with

national and local policy and guidance. It has been prepared under the Council's preferred approach; the Local Plan and associated guidance encourage the preparation and approval of masterplans for strategic sites in advance of and separate to any planning decisions. It contains an appropriate level of detail for the stage the project has reached.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1. Preparation of this masterplan has been overseen by the Council's internal, informal Strategic Planning Project Board. This includes cross-party representation from all political groups recognising that the implementation of strategic sites are long-term projects which may span administrations of the Council. The Project Board is chaired by the Executive Member for Planning & Transport. Local ward members have been invited to participate in relevant meetings of the Board.
- 5.2. As the promoter of the site, Letchworth City Heritage Foundation have been fully engaged in the masterplan's production and have consulted extensively with other stakeholders, including the general public. All parties have been invited to comment on the masterplan through a range of public consultation events.
- 5.3. The final masterplan was considered by the Project Board at its meeting of 24 June 2024. The Project Board were provided with a draft of this report and its appendices. Council officers and the developer team presented the masterplan and addressed questions from the Board. The Board endorsed the masterplan and recommended that the Service Director: Regulatory present it to Cabinet and Full Council for adoption.
- 5.4. The referral sheet from Cabinet will be published as a supplementary agenda as soon as it is available.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1. The Council's Local Plan was adopted in November 2022. This sets out the Council's strategy for meeting the development needs of the District over the period to 2031. The Plan makes provision for at least 13,000 new homes. A significant proportion of these are to be delivered on six Strategic Housing Sites – defined as sites of more than 500 homes – around the main towns in and adjoining the District.
- 7.2. The Strategic Housing Sites are of a greater size and complexity than any developments that have taken place in the District over the last twenty years. They are critical to the overall strategy of the Plan. Their implementation is essential to raising delivery rates of new homes above historic averages and addressing the acute need for housing.
- 7.3. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan sets out the Council's approach to Design and Sustainability. This states the Council will require the production of Strategic Masterplans for Strategic Housing Sites and other significant development. Significant development generally comprises development of 100 homes or more.

- 7.4. Policy SP9 also sets out a series of design principles to be followed in masterplans and applications for development meeting these thresholds. It contains documentation requirements and sets out the approaches to approval. The Local Plan encourages the submission of masterplans for agreement before the submission of a planning application. Where applications have already been submitted, the Policy also allows for masterplans to be agreed with the Council prior to their determination.
- 7.5. Masterplans are a recognised 'good practice' tool as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Government Planning Practice Guidance explains a masterplan as follows:

**What are masterplans?**

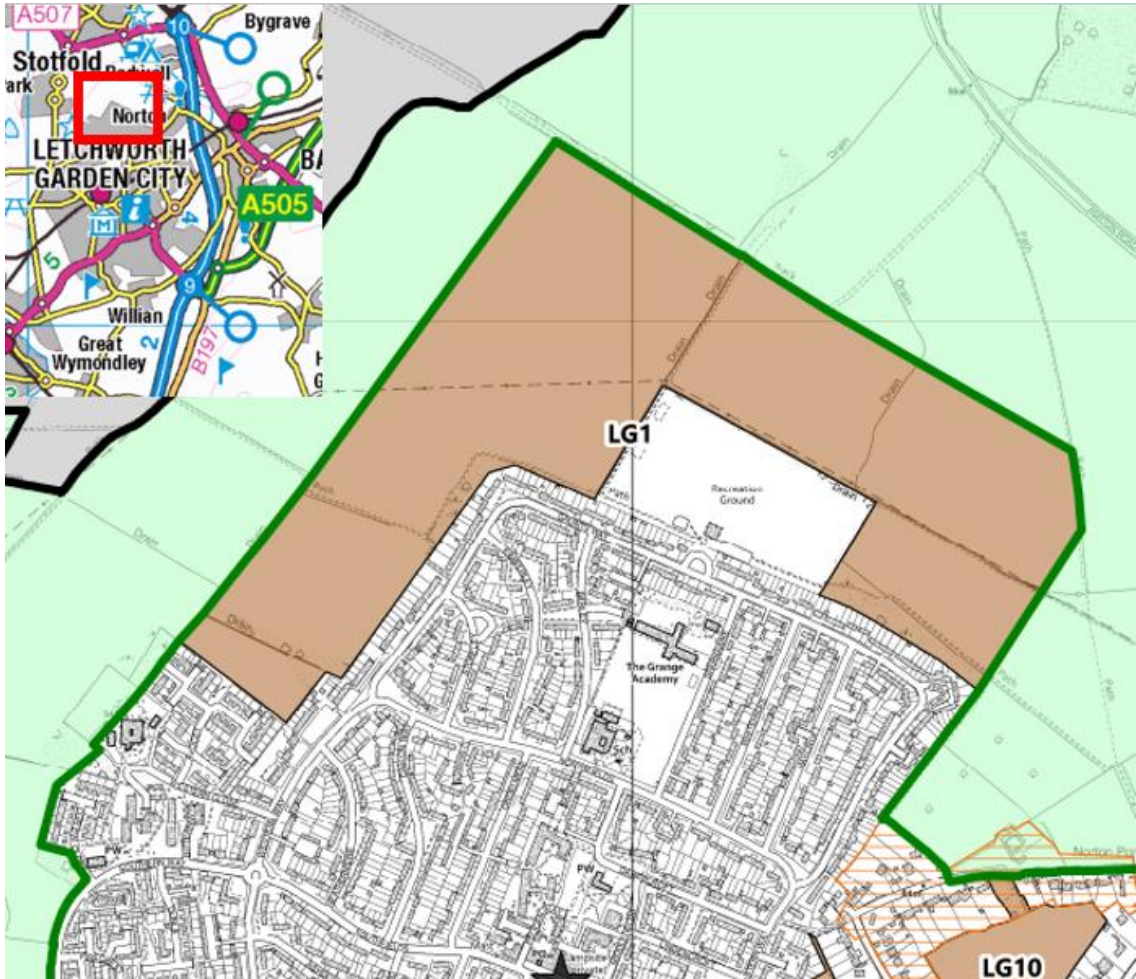
Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may indicate the intended arrangement of buildings, streets and the public realm. More specific parameters for the site's development may be set out in a [design code](#), which can accompany the overall masterplan.

A range of other plans and technical reports may be needed alongside a masterplan, to provide supporting evidence and set out related proposals, such as a local character study, landscape assessment, transport assessment and proposals for securing biodiversity net gain. An implementation strategy could also be included, especially where development is expected to be brought forward in a number of phases.

- 7.6. To support the Council's masterplanning approach, Cabinet agreed in March 2021 to establish an informal, internal Project Board to provide corporate oversight and strategic direction. This is not a formal committee or decision-making body. Through Project Board a range of associated procedural guidance has been produced and subsequently endorsed by Cabinet (see links in Section 18).
- 7.7. These say masterplans produced and approved before the submission of a planning application or prior to the determination of a planning application will follow the final approval process below (subject to a positive outcome at each step):
- Project Board recommendation to Service Director
  - Service Director recommendation to Cabinet
  - Cabinet recommendation to Full Council
  - Adoption by Full Council as a material consideration in the determination of any relevant planning applications
- 7.8. The masterplan provides a high-level spatial and design framework against which any future planning applications for the site can be considered. The level of design detail will increase as proposals move through the planning process. Formal regulatory approval will be secured through any subsequent planning permission(s). However, the masterplan has been guided by, and considered against, the key requirements of relevant policies in the Local Plan.

## 8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Site LG1 consists of approximately 45 hectares of agricultural land sited to immediately to the north of Letchworth, close to the northern boundary of North Herts District Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. An extract of the Local Plan Policies Map is shown below.



- 8.2. The site is immediately adjacent to the Grange Estate and the Grange Recreational Ground which is owned and maintained by the Council. A separate, Council-led project is ongoing to develop a design vision for the future of the Grange Recreation Ground that will benefit both existing and future residents and complement the proposed development of LG1. An update on this project is provided in the Strategic Planning Matters report to Cabinet (July 9 2024).
- 8.3. The masterplan for North Letchworth has been produced by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, who are the landowners, with control of the entire allocation site as well as land to the north of the site that will provide a proposed highway connection to Norton Road. The Foundation are in the process of appointing a delivery partner to bring forward an outline planning application and ultimately implementation of the site. The Foundation intend to remain as landowners in perpetuity and would therefore be in

control of subsequent stages of the planning and design process, through to delivery.

- 8.4. The masterplan aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Model Design Guide, as well as meeting the requirements of Policy SP15 of the local plan. Its production has followed the key stages set out in the Council's approved masterplanning guidance and this has included:
- Establishing an officer group with representatives from the District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, supported by external capacity and expertise on key issues;
  - Agreement of a masterplan brief for the site setting out key issues
  - Preparation of a multi-disciplinary evidence base on matters such as ecology, landscape, heritage and transport & access to inform proposals
  - Consideration and testing of key spatial options for the masterplan
  - Independent design review by Design South-East
  - Presentation to the Council's Project Board at draft masterplan stage
  - Public consultation; and
  - Refinement of proposals in response to the steps above to produce the final masterplan.
- 8.5. It is important to highlight that the current masterplanning work is pre-outline planning application stage. This has allowed the Foundation to work with the Council and key stakeholders, to create a clear strategic framework for the site and define the qualities of place to be delivered and provide a 'prospectus' that sets clear ambitions and expectations for LG1 in the Foundation's subsequent search for a development partner.
- 8.6. The masterplan recognises that the formal planning processes will need to allow for further development and refinement of its proposals and will be informed by the appointment of a delivery partner (anticipated at the end of 2024). This should be borne in mind when considering the masterplan; it is not an 'absolute fix' of the proposals, but does seek to define a clear framework for the development, including:
- A Vision and set of placemaking objectives.
  - Site wide design principles, to inform the next stage of masterplanning.
  - A movement framework – fixing key access points and the location of the primary street, together with key sustainable routes and connections.
  - A green and blue infrastructure framework – with strong emphasis on retaining natural habitats and improving biodiversity, to create a strategic green and blue structure and network across the site, that links into and complements The Grange Recreation Ground.
  - A landuse framework – defining key parcels and range of uses across the site.
  - An urban design framework – identifying key design features and influences, to ensure a place of quality and focussing on the appropriate relationship with The Recreation Ground.
  - A set of design principles – to define the characters across the site and ensure a variety of built form that is appropriate to Letchworth Garden City.
- 8.7. The landowner team have worked with officers from the District and County Council (and their representatives) under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) since February 2022 to develop the masterplan.

- 8.8. Emerging material from the masterplan framework was subject to formal Design Review by Design South-East in January 2024, using their North Hertfordshire-specific panel of experts (DRP). The DRP’s feedback informed further development of the draft scheme and their report has been published on the Council’s website (see Section 18).
- 8.9. In February 2024, the draft masterplan was presented to the Council Project Board. The Project Board endorsed the work undertaken to that date as an appropriate basis for public consultation.
- 8.10. Extensive consultation had been undertaken by the Foundation, as part of the emerging masterplan, dating back to June 2022. Following the Project Board in February, further consultation was undertaken with the local community over February and March 2024, in relation to the preferred masterplan option for the site. The masterplan document includes a full explanation of the engagement to date.
- 8.11. Following consultation, the landowner and Council have worked to further refine the masterplan and confirm further details regarding the preferred option, including
- Clarifying the relationship between the masterplan and subsequent planning application and design development, through the planning process, design coding and onto delivery.
  - Clarifying the design principles, to underpin the outline planning application and design code.
  - Further explanation of how the development will relate to The Grange Recreation Ground (which is subject of separate design work by the Council, as landowner).
  - Clarifying the position with the proposed primary school site, in terms of safeguarding it for future school use, which will be clarified through the outline application process.
  - Proposing potential ‘meanwhile’ uses for the school site.
  - Providing greater detail on the proposed character areas, including setting design principles.
  - Clarifying the approach to phasing and the early delivery of a construction access from Norton Road.
  - Confirming details relating to the primary route, integration of SUDS and site wide approach to parking.
  - Committing to further engagement at the Design Code stage
- 8.12. A summary assessment of the masterplan against the requirements of the relevant site-specific policy is set out in the table below. Formal assessment of any schemes’ compliance with relevant policies will be through any associated planning application(s).

<b>Policy SP15: Site LG1 – North of Letchworth Garden City</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The most appropriate points of vehicular access considering landscape and traffic impacts	The masterplan proposes access points from Norton Road and Western Way, as detailed in the Transport & Accessibility Report. These access points are subject to agreement on the detailed planning case and design with NHC and HCC and the masterplan commits to further discussions, including Central Bedfordshire Council to ensure

	<p>well-integrated access with the surrounding area and future development sites. A number of factors are being investigated in greater detail by the consultant team, ensuring that the chosen access points minimise landscape and traffic impacts, while optimising safety and connectivity.</p>
<p>Comprehensive integration into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks;</p>	<p>The masterplan demonstrates a commitment to comprehensive integration into existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport, and road networks. Strong pedestrian and cycle permeability is emphasised, aligning with natural desire lines and extending the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network to facilitate access to the Grange Estate. Furthermore, the framework identifies key areas for enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure to improve connectivity with surrounding destinations. These enhancements include the identification of crucial crossing points, and improvements to the existing Greenway and National Cycle Network (NCN) route 12. This route serves as a strategic link to Letchworth railway station and the town centre. Moreover, ongoing discussions with the main landowner of the Grange Estate, aim to safeguard the NCN12 route through the Pelican Way Local Centre, ensuring continuity and accessibility within the wider pedestrian and cycle network.</p>
<p>An appropriate education solution which delivers a new 2FE primary school on-site;</p>	<p>The masterplan designates a reserve site for a 2FE primary school. This ensures that the infrastructure can accommodate future educational needs as the development progresses and population grows. The strategic masterplanning process has considered the adaptability of the reserve school site. Meanwhile uses include consideration of a training and apprenticeship centre to facilitate local upskilling and employment relating to the phased delivery of the site.</p>
<p>Measures required to address nearby heritage assets including the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Radwell Lodge and the Croft Lane and Norton Conservation Areas;</p>	<p>The masterplan acknowledges the historical significance and archaeological value of the site, emphasising the opportunity to integrate interpretation of its history into the public realm network. A Heritage Baseline Appraisal was previously prepared, addressing the nearby heritage assets including the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Radwell Lodge and the Croft Lane and Norton Conservation Areas. This appraisal was signed off and accepted by the Council, ensuring thorough scoping of any potential impacts on these heritage assets.</p>
<p>The approach to existing trees and hedgerows around and within the site, with the</p>	<p>The masterplan aligns well with this criterion, by emphasising the preservation and enhancement of the site's natural hedgerows, shelterbelts, and</p>

<p>presumption that trees will be retained and any hedgerow losses kept to a minimum;</p>	<p>mature trees. Recognising these elements as key characteristics contributing to placemaking, the masterplan commits to protecting and enhancing these natural assets. It includes provisions for additional tree (2,000) and hedgerow planting, with a focus on reinstating previously lost hedgerows and increasing tree density, particularly along the western boundary, to enhance enclosure and mitigate coalescence risks. The Green Infrastructure (GI) framework within the masterplan further supports this approach, ensuring that the existing natural capital, including hedgerows, shelterbelts, woodlands, and mature trees, is both protected and enhanced, thus fulfilling the policy requirement.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood-level retail and community facilities providing around 900m<sup>2</sup> (net) of retail and food and beverage floorspace and a GP surgery;</p>	<p>The masterplan satisfies this by including approximately 900m<sup>2</sup> of neighbourhood-level retail and community facilities. These facilities will be designed to create a vibrant neighbourhood centre that encourages social participation and fosters a stronger sense of community. Additionally, the masterplan incorporates a sustainable mobility hub, further enhancing the appeal and functionality of the neighbourhood. The proposed facilities are intended to complement, rather than compete with, the renewed local centre of the Grange Estate, ensuring a balanced and integrated approach to local development. Additionally, the masterplan supports the provision of a GP surgery, contingent upon the requirements of local NHS providers. LGCHF commits to collaborating with the NHS and North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) to potentially include flexible space for a GP surgery within the development.</p>
<p>At least 9 serviced plots for self-build development;</p>	<p>The masterplan designates 1% of the development to self-build properties. By including self-build plots, the masterplan supports diverse housing tenures and encourages community involvement in the development process, thereby fulfilling the policy requirement for at least 9 serviced plots for self-build development.</p>
<p>Provision of an appropriate site for a care home for older people in Use Class C2 in accordance with the locational criteria in Policy HS4 subject to up-to-date assessment of likely future needs and existing supply;</p>	<p>The masterplan addresses this by planning for a 50-60 unit senior living scheme within the market component of the development. This initiative is designed to meet the identified need for elderly accommodation and provide potential relocation opportunities for existing residents. While this scheme will not be an extra care facility, it will consist of self-contained units for individuals over 60, led by a private developer. The masterplan acknowledges that the Policy SP15 requirement for a care home has been met elsewhere, hence the</p>



	<p>focus on private elderly accommodation. This approach aligns with the policy's intent to cater to the housing needs of older people, even though it differs in format by not including a traditional care home in Use Class C2.</p>
<p>Incorporate ordinary watercourses (and any appropriate measures) within comprehensive green infrastructure and / or SUDs approach;</p>	<p>The underlying baseline includes a drainage strategy that proposes incorporation of the ordinary watercourses and using these to discharge surface water flows from site subject to agreement of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The baseline summary report identifies key design implications arising from the drainage strategy. The masterplan reflects this by incorporating a series of attenuation basins and a SuDS drainage network integrated with the landscape and GI framework, to deal with surface water runoff.</p>
<p>Structural planting to create a sense of place, integration into the surrounding landscape and a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary, particularly to the north-west and east;</p>	<p>The masterplan effectively addresses this by incorporating structural planting, to enhance the sense of place and integrate the development into the surrounding landscape. To minimise the visual impact of car parking, street sections will feature integrated structural planting, particularly in areas with on-street and off-plot parking typologies. The "Avenue" character area will showcase a strong approach to structural planting with prominent street trees.</p> <p>Furthermore, the entire development is framed by a multi-functional, nature-rich green buffer designed to structure and screen long-distance views. This buffer includes wetlands, ponds, and attenuation basins, enhancing ecological value while providing additional footpaths and play areas. This green buffer also creates a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary ensuring the development is well-integrated into the broader landscape.</p>
<p>Diversion and / or re-provision of the Letchworth Greenway to provide a revised route around the new urban edge; and</p>	<p>The masterplan prioritises the maintenance and enhancement of the existing footpath network, with a specific focus on the Letchworth Greenway. The masterplan includes improvements to the Greenway's route, such as better surfacing and additional amenities like benches, picnic tables, and natural play areas, promoting walking, cycling, and leisure activities. A new loop will be added to the northwest of LG1, offering walkers an alternative route around, rather than through, the new development. This adjustment aims to preserve the rural character of the Greenway while integrating it into the new urban edge. The comprehensive network of paths will ensure direct access to the Grange Estate and connections to Letchworth town centre, as well as rural recreational routes to surrounding settlements,</p>

	Radwell Meadows, and the Etonbury Green Wheel. Detailed proposals for the pedestrian and cycle network are outlined in the Movement Framework section of the masterplan, demonstrating a thorough and considered approach to re-routing and enhancing the Letchworth Greenway to meet the policy requirements.
Undertake a detailed odour assessment to demonstrate no adverse impact on future residents and occupants of non residential buildings.	This will be submitted as part of the outline planning application, but no issues have been identified at this stage of the masterplanning work that would have an adverse impact on the development.

### Sustainability

- 8.13. In June 2022, Cabinet endorsed a series of sustainability principles, produced in consultation with the Project Board, to guide the assessment of masterplans. These recognise that sustainability is multi-faceted including consideration of social and green infrastructure and transport alongside resource use.
- 8.14. A high-level assessment of the masterplan against the sustainability principles is attached as Appendix B. This shows that the masterplan for LG1 successfully meets the the identified principles in a manner that is proportionate and appropriate to this stage of the masterplanning process. The remaining principles will be resolved as the scheme progresses through the formal planning stages and further detail becomes available.

### Next steps

- 8.15. Subject to Cabinet and Full Council approval, the masterplan will be adopted as a material consideration for any future planning decisions relating to the site. Any applications will be assessed to ensure they broadly conform to and / or facilitate the implementation of the parameters and principles set out in this document. Any substantive deviation from the masterplan will need to be justified, for example if new information comes to light that isn't available at this stage in the process.
- 8.16. Through the joint work on the masterplan a series of actions and issues have been identified that will need to be addressed as the scheme progresses towards delivery. The masterplan provides appropriate 'hooks' to accommodate these matters but the subsequent planning processes are the most appropriate place for these to be resolved and secured. These matters include (but are not limited to):
- Developing a detailed phasing plan.
  - Preparing a design code to support an outline planning application.
  - Ensuring alignment between the masterplan and the finalised design vision for The Grange Recreation Ground and any subsequent project(s), recognising that design work in relation to The Rec is ongoing by the Council.
  - Confirming access details and secondary road network, including further detail on parking solutions.
  - Evolving the detail of enhancements required to off-site routes and subsequent Section 106 contributions.
  - The provision of a site wide sustainable travel plan.

- Understanding the conclusions of further modelling of vehicular movements, to ensure the appropriate balance of traffic from Western Way to Norton Road and a suitable design response to the internal road network (as may be required).
- Identifying specific projects for off-site contributions, towards matters such as The Grange Rec (wider sports facilities) and sustainable travel improvements.
- The provision of a suitable stewardship and management strategy.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, Section 5.7.18 of the Constitution states that it may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).
- 9.2. Section 4.8.2(i) of the Constitution contains a general power for Full Council to receive and debate reports from Cabinet.
- 9.3. There is no statutorily set definition of a 'masterplan'. Unlike, for example, the Local Plan or any Supplementary Planning Documents, they are not formally defined or regulated through relevant planning acts or associated regulations – either in terms of content or process. This means there is discretion as to how, when and whether they are produced and / or approved on the part of both the applicant and the Council.
- 9.4. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022) provides a clear policy definition within the Council's statutory Development Plan of what is expected within a masterplan and the design outcomes that should be achieved.
- 9.5. Terms of Reference for the Project Board and guidance on the approval processes for masterplans have been presented to and endorsed by Cabinet, most recently in June 2023 (see link in Section 18 of this report) and [published on the Council website](#).
- 9.6. These set out that Masterplans will be subject to formal approval by Cabinet and Full Council where a masterplan is to be adopted as a material consideration in advance of the determination of the relevant planning application(s).
- 9.7. [Government Planning Practice Guidance](#) (2014) states that a material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g., whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission).
- 9.8. Formal, regulatory approval for any development of the site will be secured through any subsequent planning permission(s). These will be considered through established processes and legislation including presentation to Planning Control Committee.
- 9.9. Any approval of the Strategic Masterplan is without prejudice to the consideration and determination of any future planning application(s).
- 9.10. PPAs are made pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Acts 1972, 2000 and 2003 and under associated planning legislation and guidance, including but not limited to the Planning Act.

- 9.11. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 allows local planning authorities to charge for providing discretionary services and the legislation is clear that, where charges are made, they must not exceed the cost of providing the service.
- 9.12. At its meeting on 16 March 2021, Cabinet resolved (item 109) as part of the Local Plan Implementation report to approve the North Hertfordshire Masterplanning Principles. Within this document paragraph 2.11 states: The Council would normally expect a PPA to be used to support the preparation of Strategic Masterplans and significant development planning applications.
- 9.13. Under the Council's constitution, paragraph 14.6.4(ii) authorises the Service Director Regulatory to enter into contracts for the supply of services, relevant in this case for the use of consultants to act on the Council's behalf in the preparation of the masterplan.
- 9.14. 14.6.4(viii) authorises the Managing Director and Service Directors to set fees and charges in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and relevant policies, in consultation with the Executive Member, relevant in this case to seek to recover these costs from the Developer.
- 9.15. The PPA states that "*Nothing in the [agreement] will restrict or inhibit HCC or NHDC from exercising their statutory functions and views about the development and nothing in this agreement shall predetermine the outcome of any planning application.*"

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. The Council resources for masterplanning and implementation work are drawn from existing staff, with additional support from specialist consultants as required. The PPA seeks to recover the costs of undertaking this work. The costs will be monitored to ensure on-going cost recovery.
- 10.2. For any activities that cannot be charged through the PPA, a ring-fenced Masterplanning reserve and / or approved budgets will be used.
- 10.3. The principle of setting of fees and charges for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) was agreed by the Service Director: Regulatory in consultation with the Service Director: Finance and the Executive Member for Planning & Transport in January 2022.
- 10.4. Funding was secured through a PPA to support the Council's input to this masterplan including the recovery of external consultancy costs.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. In April 2022, a specific Masterplanning risk was created and included in the Council Delivery Plan. This has been periodically updated and reported upon. This identified and described the following:
  - Risk of poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context

- Risk that strategic sites do not maximise contribution to corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place
- Risk of delay to delivery of strategic sites if masterplan process is delayed or stalled or provides insufficient information to guide subsequent planning applications
- Failure to secure funding to resource the process
- Reduction in pre-application income and delay to income from planning applications
- Failure to retain/recruit sufficiently experienced officers
- Risk of adverse appeal findings on other/non-Local Plan sites if delivery is delayed or stalled

11.3. Key mitigations have included:

- Adoption of the Local Plan by Full Council on 8 November 2022
- The internal restructure of teams within the planning service and recruitment to additional posts identified in budget Growth Bids
- Securing external consultant resources to provide additional capacity and discipline-specific expertise;
- Delivering funding for resources through Planning Performance Agreements
- Monthly Project Board meetings to monitor and escalate any barriers to progress
- Ongoing monitoring of workload and service-wide budgets

11.4. This item will not be included in the 2024/25 Council Delivery Plan, as progress is dependent on third parties and the Council activities involved are considered business-as-usual. Strategic oversight will continue via the Project Board and Strategic Planning Matters reports to Cabinet having regard to the above broad framework.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2. The site which is subject to this masterplan was allocated for development through the Council's adopted Local Plan. An Equality Impact Assessment was produced assessing the plan's compliance with relevant legislation and requirements and submitted to Government as part of the plan's examination.

12.3. No issues with the Equality Impact Assessment were raised by the examining Inspector. Paragraph 11 of their report on the plan concluded:

*I [the Inspector] have had due regard to the aims expressed in S149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. This has included my consideration of several matters during the examination including the provision of traveller sites to meet need and accessible and adaptable housing.*

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

## **14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1. The allocation of the site in the Local Plan (and the Local Plan in general) was informed by a statutory Sustainability Appraisal which considered the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the Plan. This informed the mitigation measures contained in Policy SP9, the site-specific policy for the site and general policies on matters such as biodiversity and transport.
- 14.2 The applicant and / or Council will need to consider whether any future planning application(s) for this site require further statutory environmental assessment. This, and the supporting evidence that will be required will inform the detailed mitigation measures that will be required as part of the scheme and will be secured through any permission(s) and associated legal agreement(s).

## **15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 None

## **16. APPENDICES**

- 16.1 Appendix A – North of the Grange (LG1) Strategic Masterplan Framework
- 16.2 Appendix B – Assessment against approved Sustainability Principles

## **17. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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**18. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 18.1 [Local Plan Implementation - report to Cabinet, March 2021](#) [*including masterplanning principles and establishment of Project Board*]
- 18.2 [Local Plan adoption – report to Cabinet and Full Council, November 2022](#)
- 18.3 [Strategic Planning Matters – report to Cabinet, July 2023](#) [*including endorsement of current Project Board Terms of Reference and process notes*]
- 18.4 [North Herts Council Website – Masterplans](#) [*See North of Letchworth page for baseline evidence summary report and Design Review Panel report*]