

**FULL COUNCIL**  
**11 July 2024**

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: NORTH STEVENAGE 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 Full Council to positively recommend the approval of the Strategic Masterplan Framework for land to the north of Stevenage to Full Council. This site is allocated for development in the Council's adopted Local Plan (Site NS1, Policy SP16) 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 for the site 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 North Stevenage, 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.

## **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, Croudace Homes have been fully engaged in the masterplan's production. Graveley Parish Council and other stakeholders, including the general public, have been invited to comment on the masterplan through public consultation.
- 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. These are supplemented by a range of Local Housing Allocations which range in size up to approximately 300 homes within and around the District's towns and villages.
- 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?**

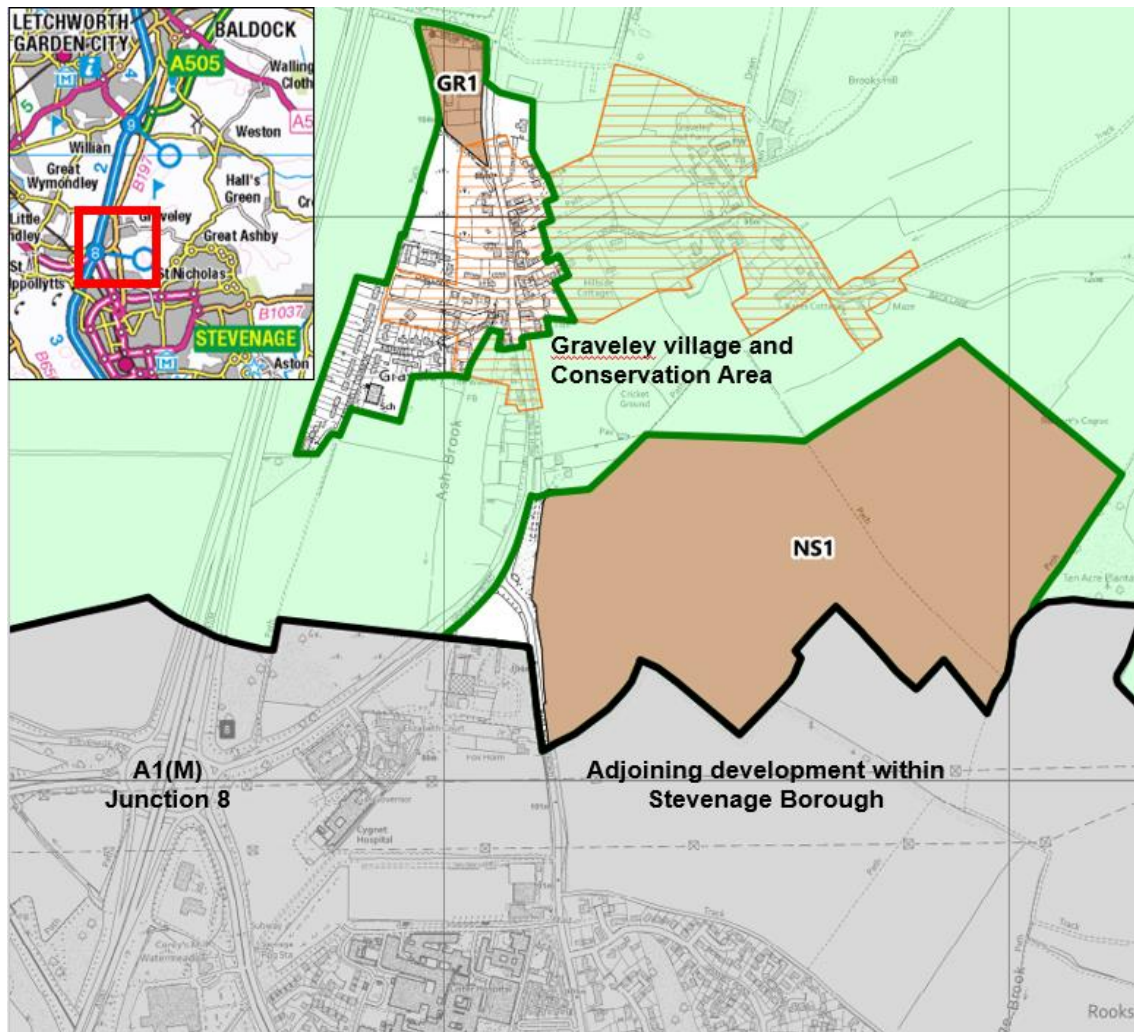
Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may 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 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 NS1 consists of approximately 43 hectares of agricultural land sited to the south-west of Graveley and lying between the village and the administrative boundary with Stevenage Borough to the south. An annotated extract of the Local Plan Policies Map is shown below.
- 8.2. The adjoining land within Stevenage Borough is allocated in their own Local Plan and benefits from planning permission for a residential-led development of approximately 800 homes with associated community facilities, including a primary school, and green infrastructure, including a proposed country park which adjoins the NS1 to the south-east. The site in Stevenage Borough is under construction.



- 8.3. The masterplan for North Stevenage has been produced by Croudace Homes. Croudace Homes are a regional housebuilder and the intended developer of the site. It is presently Croudace Homes' intention to deliver the entirety of the North Stevenage site. They have control of the entire allocation site to the relevant highway boundaries and connection points and submitted an outline planning application in December 2023 (planning reference 23/02935/OP). This is presently under consideration.

- 8.4. In parallel to the masterplan and application, Croudace Homes have agreed in principle to prepare a Design Code for the site. Design Codes are recognised and encouraged by Government guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework. The glossary of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023, Annex 2) defines Design Codes as follows:

**Design code:** A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

- 8.5. The masterplan recognises that the Design Code and formal planning processes allow for further development and refinement of its proposals. This should be borne in mind when considering the masterplan; it is not an 'absolute fix' of the proposals.
- 8.6. Production of the masterplan has followed the key stages set out in the Council's approved masterplanning guidance. 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.
- 8.7. The landowner team have worked with officers from the District and County Council (and their representatives) under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) since January 2022 to develop the masterplan.
- 8.8. Emerging material from the masterplan framework was subject to formal Design Review by Design South-East in February 2023 using their North Hertfordshire-specific panel of experts (DRP). The DRP's feedback informed further development of the draft scheme. The DRP report was published as part of the planning application for the site and is also available on the [Council's masterplanning webpages](#).
- 8.9. In May 2023, 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. Consultation included a public exhibition at Stevenage Town Rugby Club in July 2023. Invites were sent to local councillors, stakeholders and residents including all addresses in Graveley village and properties along Back Lane. This was accompanied by a website (<http://northstevenage.croudacehomes.co.uk/>) which has remained available since with the consultation material and contact details. A Statement of Community Involvement

was as part of the outline planning application which contains further detail on engagement and is available through the link in paragraph 8.8.

8.11. Following consultation, the landowner and Council have worked to further refine the masterplan and address issues raised including

- Clarifying the relationship between the masterplan and subsequent design development through the planning process and design coding
- Aligning the development objectives to the national model design code
- Further explanation of how the existing landscape context will influence proposals
- Ensuring site-wide, connected routes for utility journeys by foot and bike
- Rationalising formal routes in the proposed green corridors to allow more sympathetic treatments and to complement their ecological function
- Providing more information on potential street types
- Simplifying the presentation of green infrastructure to allow for design development through the Design Code and planning processes
- Ensuring consistency and compatibility of the various masterplan layers
- Providing clear frontages around development parcels and key routes
- Expanding the high-level sustainability and energy framework section
- Simplifying the approach to character areas within the site to provide an appropriate starting point for a future Design Code and ensuring these cover both built form and green infrastructure
- Committing to further engagement at the Design Code stage

8.12. The masterplan has focussed upon establishing an appropriate spatial framework for the site through a clear series of plans setting out the proposed approaches to:

- Land Use – identifying the areas of the site to be used for residential, structural green space, a primary school and community hub
- Development – identifying the built / non-built areas
- Movement and Access – identifying a hierarchy of routes for vehicles, the proposed bus route and utility and leisure routes for pedestrians and cyclists (both on-road and off road) with illustrative sections and design principles
- Green infrastructure – identifying a series of key spaces in and around the site with associated design principles aligned to the Council's open space standards
- Biodiversity – identifying key assets to be retained and enhanced and dark corridors and light-sensitive zones to be considered in developing the green infrastructure proposals
- Height and density – showing variation from two-storeys at the more sensitive edges to the site to a maximum of four storeys along the gateway street and south-western quarter of the site
- Urban Design – identifying a block structure which will provide clear definition of the street hierarchy with landmark buildings at key points to aid legibility
- Illustrative masterplan – showing how the parameters could be combined and the site developed
- Character areas – four broad areas are identified within the site where different forms of development and green infrastructure might be appropriate in response to the site context and proposed development layout. These will form the starting point for a subsequent design code.

- 8.13. 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 SP16: Site NS1 – North of Stevenage</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
A comprehensive and deliverable Strategic Masterplan for the entire allocation is to be prepared and agreed between the landowner/developer and the Council	The masterplan is being presented to this meeting for consideration
Integration with adjoining development in Stevenage Borough including site-wide solutions for access, sustainable travel, education, retail, and other necessary medical and social infrastructure to include:	<p>The masterplan shows the main access route entering from North Road, serving the key facilities at the centre of the site and connecting to the development in Stevenage at a point which has been agreed and fixed by the permissions for that development.</p> <p>See below for commentary on the remaining elements of this criterion.</p>
2FE of primary-age education provision either wholly within the site or in conjunction with the adjoining land allocated for development in Stevenage Borough ensuring adequate primary school capacity across both sites over the lifetime of the developments;	<p>A site for a two-form entry (2FE) primary school is identified on the flattest land at the centre of the site. This is supported by the County Council subject to the detailed technical investigations that will be required as part of any planning permission and land transfer agreement.</p> <p>A separate primary school site has already been permitted within the Stevenage Borough site to provide places for those homes.</p> <p>The phasing and delivery of the school site will be further considered and managed through the planning application and design code processes. Consideration will be given to any appropriate 'meanwhile' uses of the site until such time as the school is required.</p>
<p>Travel provision designed having regard to the Stevenage Mobility Strategy and including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective links into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks; and</li> <li>• an upgraded junction at the intersection of Graveley Road / North Road</li> </ul>	<p>The masterplan layout has been designed to prioritise active and sustainable modes of travel. A bus loop will connect through the NS1 site and the adjoining development in Stevenage including a proposed car free section adjoining the school and community hub.</p> <p>Multiple points of walking and / or cycling connection are provided between the two sites providing onward links into the established pedestrian and cycle network in Stevenage.</p>



	<p>Links in the north-west and south-west corners of the site connect into Graveley and the B197 North Road.</p> <p>Outside of the masterplan process, works have recently been completed to signalise the Graveley / North Road intersection. Work is ongoing to design and deliver a wider, shared-use path alongside the B197 between Stevenage and Graveley, and upgrading the National Cycle Network route 12, which runs through Graveley and up to Letchworth and Baldock. The masterplan facilitates a potential routing of this link inside the western site boundary potentially providing a more direct and amenable route than via the Graveley Road / North Road intersection.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood-level retail facilities subject to an up-to-date assessment of local demand and supply;</p>	<p>The evidence supporting the masterplan identifies there is now unlikely to be sufficient demand to support retail provision. This takes account of existing retail in the area, facilities which have already been approved or allocated within Stevenage and changes in retail habits since the production of the evidence which underpins the Local Plan.</p> <p>The masterplan therefore includes an appropriate, central location within the NS1 site for a community hub co-located opposite the school and proposed play facilities. The masterplan identifies a range of possible uses including co-working spaces, meeting rooms, small cafe, health, childcare and a community hall. Detailed proposals will be developed as the scheme progresses.</p>
<p>A detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery</p>	<p>Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) are provided within the site. The masterplan identifies 'in principle' solutions for wastewater drainage. These will be secured through the planning process and / or separate agreements between the developer and wastewater providers.</p>
<p>At least 9 serviced plots for self-build development</p>	<p>This is not explicitly addressed at this stage. Appropriate locations for self-build will be identified through the Design Code and / or planning approvals.</p>
<p>Structural planting to create a sense of place, integration into surrounding landscape and a long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary to the north</p>	<p>The landscape and green infrastructure proposals are central to the overall structure of the masterplan layout. A landscape buffer along the northern perimeter is proposed that is sensitive to the landscape setting of the site allowing it to integrate into its surroundings. This will consist of a mix of hedgerow and tree planting.</p> <p>The open space in the masterplan layout exceeds the Council's overall standards by approximately</p>



	<p>20%. Guidelines are provided for different types of open space. The indicative plans show a Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 10% can be achieved on site with opportunities to exceed this to be explored as detailed elements of the scheme are fixed and / or further development.</p>
<p>Integration of existing public rights of way to provide routes through the site to the wider countryside... including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footpath Graveley 006 and Bridleway Gravely 008 along the perimeter of the site; and</li> <li>• Footpath Graveley 007 as a south-east to north-west route through the site and link path from the urban area to the Stevenage Outer Orbital Path</li> </ul>	<p>Generous landscape buffers are proposed along the north-west and eastern edges of the site incorporating the perimeter Rights of Way.</p> <p>The 'central park' area along the Hertfordshire Way corridor is a key defining feature of the masterplan. This significant area of open space will incorporate footpath Graveley 007, link through to the proposed country park in Stevenage and adjoin the proposed school and community hub.</p>
<p>Sensitive consideration of existing settlements, landscape features and heritage assets including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Graveley village and Conservation Area;</li> <li>ii. the St Nicholas &amp; Rectory Lane Conservation Area including the Grade I listed St Nicholas Church and Rook's Nes</li> <li>iii. Chesfield Park.</li> <li>iv. Church of St Etheldreda</li> <li>v. Manor Farm</li> </ol>	<p>The masterplan is supported by a wide-ranging evidence base including landscape and heritage studies. The approach to the northern boundary – which lies closest to the Graveley Conservation Area – and eastern boundary – which adjoining the St Nicholas &amp; Rectory Lane Conservation Area – have been informed by these studies.</p>
<p>Detailed design and layout of the site to be informed by site-specific assessments to mitigate any landscape, heritage and Green Belt impacts to the fullest reasonable extent</p>	<p>See above. This criterion refers to 'detailed design and layout' this will follow later in the planning process. However, the masterplan sets an appropriate framework for these requirements to be achieved.</p> <p>The outline planning application for this site is accompanied by a statutory Environmental Statement and impact assessments. These 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).</p>

### Sustainability

- 8.14. 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.
- 8.15. A high-level assessment of the masterplan against the sustainability principles is attached as Appendix B. This shows that the masterplan for NS1 successfully meets the majority of the identified principles (19 out of 25). Of the remainder, three have been partially met at this point with further detail to follow and three have not been addressed at this stage of the scheme development as the scheme has not yet reached the relevant stage of design development. These matters will be resolved as the scheme progresses through the formal planning stages.

### Next steps

- 8.16. 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.
- 8.17. 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 detailed proposals for:
    - The mobility hubs including ensuring compatibility with any (emerging) schemes in Stevenage for car clubs and bike hire
    - The precise nature and specification of the walking and cycle connection from the north-east of the site towards Graveley
    - Uses to be accommodated in the community hub; this is to include liaison with the NHS to ensure sufficient GP capacity is provided across the wider Stevenage area having regard to the cumulative impact of development proposals around the town
  - Identifying specific projects for off-site contributions towards matters such as sports provision and sustainable travel improvements
  - Clarifying the potential phasing and delivery of the school site and, at the request of the Project Board, considering appropriate 'meanwhile uses' for this land if it is not anticipated to come forward until later in the scheme
  - Considering and securing the most appropriate management and stewardship model for the social, green, blue [water] and transport infrastructure that will be provided

## **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 outline planning application for this site is accompanied by a statutory Environmental Statement and impact assessments. These 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 Stevenage Strategic Masterplan Framework

16.2 Appendix B – Assessment against approved Sustainability Principles

## **17. CONTACT OFFICERS**

17.1 Ian Fullstone – Service Director, Regulatory  
01462 474480 [ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.2 Nigel Smith – Strategic Planning Manager  
01462 474847 [nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.3 Sohanna Srinivasan – Principal Planning & Urban Design Officer  
01462 474174 [sohanna.srinivasan@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:sohanna.srinivasan@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.4 Edward Leigh – Senior Transport Policy Officer  
01462 474368 [edward.leigh@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:edward.leigh@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.5 Hollie Hawkins – Planning Officer  
01462 474425 [hollie.hawkins@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:hollie.hawkins@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.6 Yvette Roberts – Legal Officer  
01462 474310 [yvette.roberts@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:yvette.roberts@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.7 Ian Couper – Service Director of Resources  
01462 474243 [ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.8 Jo Keshishian – Human Resources Operations Manager  
01462 474314 [Jo.keshishian@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Jo.keshishian@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.9 Reuben Ayavoo – Policy and Communities Manager  
01462 474212 [reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk)

17.10 Ellie Hollingsworth – Policy & Strategy Trainee  
01462 474220 [ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk)

## **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 Stevenage page for baseline summary report, statement of consultation and Design Review Panel report]