



**REPORT of  
HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES**

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**to  
PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE  
16 APRIL 2014**

**UPDATE ON MASTERPLAN PRODUCTION**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on the production of the:
- North Heybridge Garden Suburb Masterplan.
  - South Maldon Garden Suburb Masterplan.
- 1.2 The Garden Suburb Masterplans relate to Policy S4 of the Pre-Submission Local Development Plan (LDP) on pages 26-33.

**2. AREA FOR DECISION / ACTION**

- 2.1 This report provides an update on progress in preparation of the strategic Masterplan frameworks for the proposed South Maldon and North Heybridge Garden Suburbs.
- 2.2 Work on the Masterplans is being progressed in advance of adoption of the LDP to enable key strategic issues such as infrastructure provision, flood risk mitigation and environmental protection and management to be addressed in a coordinated manner. The Masterplans are being developed in partnership between the Council, developers/landowners, relevant stakeholders and the local community. Masterplanning working groups have been established with landowners/ developers and key infrastructure providers for each of the Garden Suburbs to progress the preparation of comprehensive Masterplan Frameworks. A Member's Briefing Group has also been established to receive regular updates on progress with development of the Masterplans for the two garden suburbs and to act as a sounding board for emerging ideas around the Masterplan concepts. Further briefings are currently being arranged and details will be supplied to Members shortly. Meetings have taken place with Maldon Town Council and Heybridge Parish Council to keep them up to date with progress on the masterplanning process.
- 2.3 Further discussions are to take place with representatives of NHS England and the local medical practices regarding the provision to be made for future medical facilities within the Masterplan Frameworks.
- 2.4 South Maldon Garden Suburb**

- 2.4.1 A key focus of the masterplanning work for the South Maldon Garden Suburb has been on the development of a comprehensive access strategy including the delivery of a new relief road to the north of the A414 at Wyke Hill. A number of options have been developed and are currently being assessed in consultation with Essex County Council.
- 2.4.2 The Project Team (representing the developers / landowners) is in consultation with the Essex Wildlife Trust regarding the protection and enhancement of the Maldon Wick Local Wildlife Site and the creation of appropriate pedestrian linkages.
- 2.4.3 A site-wide Drainage Strategy is being developed in consultation with the Environment Agency and Essex County Council in the context of the Maldon and Heybridge Surface Water Plan. This will identify any necessary surface water mitigation measures.

## **2.5 North Heybridge Garden Suburb**

- 2.5.1 It is recognised that without flood alleviation in place it will be difficult to develop in any area to the northwest of Heybridge due to the constrained capacity of the existing urban watercourse system and significant on-site water attenuation (SuDs) and outflow control requirements. Funding for the delivery of a Heybridge Flood Alleviation scheme is problematic due to the high costs (2006 Heybridge Flood Alleviation Scheme estimate was £8 million) against a relatively small number of properties that would be protected for this cost. Significant local contributions would be required (potentially >80% of scheme cost) as central government grant-in-aid would be a small component. Without development-led delivery of flood alleviation, the Environment Agency advise that there could be a considerable wait for alternative financial contributions to come forward and there would still be frequent occurrences of flooding in the interim period. The Environment Agency advise that the North Heybridge Garden Suburb Masterplan area is the ideal location to capture and divert flows away from the urban areas from up-catchment.
- 2.5.2 The need for a strategic flood alleviation scheme has been identified in the LDP as a requirement of development of the North Heybridge Garden Suburb and the project team has been working with the Environment Agency, Essex County Council and Essex Waterways to help provide a long term solution to the problems of surface water flooding at Holloway Road and the surrounding areas to the north of Heybridge. In principle agreement has been reached on a concept design and work will continue over the next few months on the development of a detailed design solution. The evolving proposals involve the creation of a number of wetland areas, which will collect the surface water coming from the higher land to the north, and will also add to the local biodiversity. The water will be redirected westwards before being discharged slowly into the Chelmer and Blackwater rivers system. The involvement of the Environment Agency, Essex County Council and Essex Waterways will ensure that there is a sound technical consideration of flooding issues as the developer's design concept evolves.
- 2.5.3 The project team is working closely with Essex County Council on the development of an overall access strategy including a new relief road to the north of Heybridge between Broad Street Green Road and Langford Road.

## 2.6 Stakeholder and Public Engagement

2.6.1 Stakeholder and public engagement is an integral part of preparation of the Masterplans and a number of events have taken place or are currently being planned. Details are summarised below:

## 2.7 South Maldon Garden Suburb

2.7.1 A stakeholder workshop was held on 24 January to gather views and ideas to feed into the vision and objectives for the Garden Suburb and spatial Masterplan. The workshop was attended by representatives of local groups and organisations, infrastructure providers, District and Town Councillors, District Council Officers and developers/ landowners and was facilitated by ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications- part of the Homes & Communities Agency) in an impartial role. The workshop focused on key issues, vision and objectives and spatial options and a report on the outcomes has been circulated to all attendees.

2.7.2 A number of points of consensus were identified through the concept plans prepared at the workshop including:

- The need to provide green infrastructure within the development not concentrated at the edges.
- Interventions to Limebrook Way necessary to reduce its barrier effect and promote integration with Maldon town.
- Creation of multi-functional community hub.
- Soft edge needed to countryside but not necessarily through creating a green space buffer.
- Importance of retaining and enhancing nature reserve as a key feature.

2.7.3 Some points of difference emerged at the workshop. These issues are being explored through the development of draft Masterplan options:

- How green infrastructure is distributed throughout the neighbourhoods.
- Location and nature of local centre- adjoining Limebrook Way or within heart of neighbourhood.
- Location and distribution of employment uses.
- Treatment of A414 - different ideas for addressing issue of proposed relief road and its design.
- Need for an additional pedestrian route through the nature reserve.

2.7.4 A community event took place in the West Maldon Community Centre on 1 March. The material presented included emerging Masterplan options which were informed by the outcomes of the stakeholder workshop. A leaflet was circulated to local residents inviting them to attend the event and comment on the Masterplan options. The event was promoted in both of the local newspapers; Maldon and Burnham Standard and the Essex Chronicle on Thursday 20 February 2014. A flyer was created which set out the approach to the development and also incorporated a freepost comment form for residents to post back. It provided a telephone number, website address and an email address so residents could find out more, comment and ask questions. This flyer was posted and emailed, where possible, to a stakeholder database of more than 50 local groups, companies and organisations including

Maldon Town Council with a request to distribute and display. It was also sent directly to the homes of 2,000 residents closest to the site. The project team has set up a web site <http://www.southmaldongardensuburb.co.uk/>.

2.7.5 A total of 229 residents attended the event, with 206 residents signing in to provide their details for further information. A total of 96 respondents completed the comment forms and handed them in at the exhibition. A further nine residents have completed the comment form via the website.

2.7.6 Representatives from the project team and Maldon District Council (MDC) were available on the day to discuss the proposals with attendees and answer questions. The key topics discussed included:

- Transport and access – particularly access on to Limebrook Way and vehicle speeds and the need for and implementation of off-site improvements to the A414 at Eves Corner, Danbury and Hatfield Peverel to accommodate traffic associated with the proposed development.
- Scale of development and impact on the character of Maldon.
- Infrastructure – particularly the need for a new doctors surgery and a school on the site and the timescales for delivery of these facilities and the local centre.
- Increased pressures on car parking in the town centre.
- Ways to make cycling and walking more appealing and the need for improved public transport provision to train stations, Chelmsford and the town centre in order to encourage use of more sustainable transport modes and alleviate parking issues.
- Wildlife – protection of existing habitats, enhancement and new foraging opportunities.
- Density and design – a low density, attractive development was on the whole preferred.
- Visual amenity – there was a preference from those living to north of Limebrook Way for a green buffer along the northern edge of the development.
- Employment – the need to create investment and new job opportunities in Maldon.

## **2.8 North Heybridge Garden Suburb**

2.8.1 A stakeholder workshop took place on 7 March to gather views and ideas to feed into the vision and objectives for the Garden Suburb and spatial Masterplan. The workshop was attended by representatives of local groups and organisations, infrastructure providers, District and Town Councillors, District Council Officers and developers/ landowners and was facilitated by ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications- part of the Homes & Communities Agency) in an impartial role. The workshop focused on key issues, vision and objectives and spatial options and a report on the outcomes will be circulated to all attendees.

2.8.2 A number of points of consensus were identified through the concept plans prepared at the workshop including:

- Community Hub to be accessible to residents of the garden suburb and existing communities to the south and east.
- Need for good transport links and access to existing communities.
- Acceptance of garden suburb design principles.

2.8.3 Some points of difference emerged at the workshop. These issues are being explored through the development of draft Masterplan options:

- Location of Country Park.
- Location of local centre/ community hub- to the south of Heybridge Wood or further west.
- Protection of setting of Heybridge Wood and relationship to overall green and blue infrastructure strategy.

2.8.4 Given the importance attached to issues of flooding, wider public engagement will not take place until details of the proposed strategic flood mitigation strategy are available for discussion with local residents. It is anticipated that that this event will take place later in the Spring. The event will be well advertised to ensure the full engagement of residents and stakeholders.

## **2.9 Next Steps**

2.9.1 Work on the Garden Suburb Masterplans will continue to be progressed taking into account stakeholder and public consultation and further technical studies.

2.9.2 Planning consent for the development of sites within the Garden Suburb areas will only be granted by the Council if the proposals are in accordance with the respective Masterplans being produced. It is currently anticipated that the draft Masterplans will be completed during late Spring / early Summer before the commencement of the LDP Examination-in-Public hearings. This will be followed by a period of formal public consultation prior to agreement and endorsement by the Council. Following the adoption of the LDP the intention is to adopt the Garden Suburb Masterplans as Supplementary Planning Documents.

2.9.3 The production and agreement of the Garden Suburb Masterplans in accordance with the LDP policies is central to ‘front-loading’ the planning of the respective Garden Suburb areas in accordance with national guidance and best practice (National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraphs 188-195). Once the Masterplans have been endorsed by the Council, the submission of planning applications for the sites within the Garden Suburbs will be encouraged.

2.9.4 Pre-application discussions on individual sites within the Garden Suburbs will be welcomed by the Council following the agreement in principle of key aspects and elements of the respective Garden Suburb Masterplans which could impact upon individual sites. This will ensure that planning applications on individual sites are progressed on a consistent basis in accordance with the principles agreed and established through the Masterplans, and that Council resources are not diverted away from the production and finalisation of the Masterplans.

## **3. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS**

3.1 Sustainable growth and development and a vibrant local economy are key considerations in supporting the corporate goals of:

- Meeting the housing needs of the District.

- Enabling, supporting and empowering communities to be safe, active and healthy.
- Protecting and shaping the District and balancing the future needs of the community.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Positive, through a plan-led and front loaded approach to planning the development.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The Garden Suburb Masterplans aim to deliver high quality new development to meet the needs of the District in accordance with the policies being established through the LDP. This includes planning to meet the housing needs for an ageing population and also for affordable housing. The production of the Garden Suburb Masterplans considers the different needs of the local community and stakeholders through an ongoing process of community and stakeholder engagement.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Ongoing effective stakeholder engagement in the process of Masterplan production is essential.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The successful and effective progression of the Masterplans through to completion requires a financial commitment from the Council to ensure adequate resources are in place to deliver the project. A financial commitment to ongoing stakeholder engagement is also required.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Consultancy support has been procured to ensure the continued effective project management of the Garden Suburbs Masterplans. ATLAS is also continuing to provide free and impartial support to the process. The successful and effective progression of the Masterplans through to completion requires continued commitment from various departments across the Council and from other partner organisations.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Positive, the outcomes of the Masterplanning process will ensure high quality built and natural environments to live, work and visit.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The progression of the Masterplans for North Heybridge Garden Suburb and South Maldon Garden Suburb is fundamental to delivering the policy requirements within the Pre-Submission LDP. The report provides an update on progress to date and sets out the next steps required to finalise and implement the Masterplans alongside the Examination-in-Public of the Local Development Plan.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the update provided be noted; and

- (ii) That the next steps and future approach for the finalisation and implementation of the Garden Suburb Masterplans set out in paragraphs 2.9.1 – 2.9.4 of the report be endorsed.

Background Papers:

Pre-Submission Local Development Plan (MDC, 2014).

National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, 2012).

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