

# ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2018

## FARNBOROUGH CIVIC QUARTER MASTERPLAN

### SUMMARY

The panel will receive an update presentation on the development of the masterplan for the Farnborough Civic Quarter area. This report sets the context for the presentation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Farnborough Civic Quarter site is currently home to Farnborough Leisure Centre, Elles Hall community centre, Farnborough library, Westmead House (offices), a skate park, surface car parks and a public green space. It was also home to the now-demolished police station.
- 1.2 The Civic Quarter offers a significant opportunity for a development that integrates with the town centre. Our emerging proposals will seek to create a vibrant mixed-use space, providing new opportunities for town centre living alongside active ground floor uses, such as cafes and restaurants along with the leisure centre, library and community space provision. Improvements to the public realm will see an improved central green, forming the focal point for events, and improved pedestrian links between the town centre (to the side of Iceland) and Farnborough Business Park.

## 2. POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Farnborough Town Centre SPD (adopted 2007) provides the 'bigger picture' for the town centre, identifying a vision and a set of objectives for the town over a 10 to 15 year timeframe, guiding development and attracting investment.
- 2.2 The document sets key design and development principles for six main areas in the town centre. For the Civic Quarter the SPD focused upon the need to unify and strengthen the Civic Quarter and its functions and provide a new public space. Five key principles were identified:
  1. To create a unified Civic Quarter with a strong new identity.
  2. To enhance the area's role in the functioning of the town centre.
  3. To provide an attractive public space which can be used by people of all ages in the town centre.

4. To connect the new Business Park in the south to the town centre in the north.
  5. To improve connections from the residential areas across Farnborough Road to the town centre.
- 2.3 In 2012, the Farnborough Town Centre Partnership and Rushmoor Borough Council prepared a Prospectus for the town centre. The aim of this document was to promote the ongoing work which is being undertaken to improve Farnborough town centre and to attract new investment to the area.
- 2.4 The document reinforces the Council's commitment to improving the town centre and meeting its vision for Farnborough 'to create a vibrant shopping, leisure, service and employment centre which provides for the needs of the local community, local employees and local businesses'.
- 2.5 The document sets out the town's strategy for growth, outlines a number of projects that are currently underway in the town centre and highlights key sites for redevelopment and improvement.
- 2.6 The Farnborough Civic Quarter Supplementary Planning Document<sup>1</sup> (SPD) (June 2015) sets out a vision, design and delivery principles and an example scheme layout to guide future development in the Civic Quarter. A number of principles and development priorities are identified in the SPD for the Civic Quarter, including:
1. Re-establish a network of connected streets and spaces that historically existed in the area but were lost over time.
  2. Integrate the site with its context and adjoining streets to overcome its current disconnection for pedestrians and cyclists.
  3. Enhance the central green space and retain significant trees in the area.
  4. Establish a balance of uses that contributes to Farnborough's long term vitality.
  5. Ensure continuity of existing community uses as sites within the area come forward and are redeveloped.
  6. Deliver practical development plots that can come forward flexibly to accommodate different uses.
  7. Work within existing ownership and occupancy boundaries as much as possible to facilitate the re-provision of community services.
  8. Be as flexible as possible in terms of phasing, to respond to opportunities and necessities as they arise.
  9. Enable as much change as possible in terms of redevelopment before requiring major infrastructure investment

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=15059&p=0>

### **3. PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 3.1 Since the adoption of the Civic Quarter Masterplan SPD, the Council has been working with the other landowners of the site – Hampshire County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) (now known as Homes England) and the Wilky Group on a masterplan proposal for the site. This work began in earnest in January 2017 when AECOM was appointed as the consultant to lead on the development of the masterplan and to take forward an outline planning application for the former police station site as a first phase of development on behalf of the HCA.
- 3.2 The landowners entered into a memorandum of understanding in March 2017 with the following objectives agreed between all parties:
1. To jointly masterplan the Civic Quarter to deliver comprehensive regeneration which delivers the vision and considers the whole Civic Quarter rather than individual sites as piecemeal development.
  2. To masterplan the site to enable the regeneration to come forward on a phased basis in accordance with individual landowners' aspirations and delivery timetables
  3. To ensure masterplan proposals are both viable and deliverable
  4. To work collaboratively throughout the design and delivery process to ensure high quality design, reduce costs and accelerate delivery
- 3.3 In January 2017, Rushmoor Borough Council went out to tender for property advice with the aim of having an understanding of the value of its assets, both existing use value and in terms of redevelopment potential and an understanding of its options in terms of maximising the value of each asset whilst retaining or re-providing civic uses. The brief also sought some design and cost consultancy advice in order to understand the costs of rebuilding or refurbishing both the community centre and leisure centre to meet existing needs and space requirements. GVA was appointed to undertake this work on behalf of the Council and a first draft of their report was received in September 2017.
- 3.4 Demolition of the police station building took place in March 2017 and a public consultation event for the site, the proposed first phase of the regeneration of the Civic Quarter, took place on Tuesday 9 January 2018, offering people the chance to find out about the HCA's proposals for the future development of the site and to provide feedback. Copies of the consultation panels and survey form can be viewed online via the Council's website and comments can be made until 5pm on Friday 16 February.

### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The landowners are working collaboratively on the completion of the Masterplan report. We are anticipating the draft Masterplan report being available later in Q1 or early Q2 2018/19, subject to the Council making further decisions in relation to the future refurbishment or replacement of the Farnborough Leisure Centre, which will be considered by Cabinet in due course.

- 4.2 Officers are conscious there has been limited engagement with local residents/stakeholders since the adoption of the Civic Quarter Masterplan SPD in 2015 and in order to bring forward a successful development, it will be important to get the appropriate buy in and sense of ownership by local residents. Subsequently, it is anticipated that public engagement work will be undertaken on the emerging Masterplan report for the site. The format of this engagement is yet to be decided both in terms of the scope and the model by which it would work most effectively.
- 4.3 The Council's regeneration team is now working with external regeneration and housing development specialists, RegenCo, to develop the business cases, options analyses and more detailed implementation plans needed to ensure the Council can both increase the pace of delivery whilst managing the levels of risk inherent in this type of project. As set out in the Cabinet report of 8 January 2018, the Council is intending to commence a process to select a partner to work alongside the Council to bring forward projects such as the Civic Quarter and RegenCo will also provide support to this work.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Farnborough Civic Quarter Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – available on the Council's website

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