

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Commercial Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Lois Bowser</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Colchester Northern Gateway Master Plan Review</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	Mile End and Highwoods		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Draft Local Plan Policy NC1 requires any development at the Northern Gateway to be in accordance with a Masterplan document, to be approved by the Council and requiring an agreed design approach and compatible uses. The first version of a Masterplan was produced in 2012 and was well supported by public consultation in 2014. It was updated in 2016 and endorsed by the Local Plan Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016 subject to improvements to the written text and illustrative material.
- 1.2 The Masterplan has subsequently been updated and amended to align with the Local Plan Publication Draft land use allocations for the Northern Gateway and is attached as Appendix 1. The final version of the Masterplan is presented here to the Local Plan Committee for endorsement.

## 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 Committee is asked to:
  - Adopt the Masterplan, including the urban design principles forming an urban design framework for the Northern Gateway, as guidance for development and future planning applications.
  - Agree that this final Masterplan document should become a material consideration in the consideration of planning proposals in the Northern Gateway area.
  - Note that a follow-on Public Realm Landscape Strategy for the Northern Gateway has also been produced and is attached as Appendix 2.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Masterplan was first prepared five years ago and was endorsed by the Local Plan Committee for the purposes of public consultation in June 2014. Since then there has been significant change with proposed road and facility development taking place, and further proposals have been submitted as planning applications. The Local Plan is being reviewed, and includes policy changes in respect of the Northern Gateway. As a consequence it was considered there was a need to update and review the Masterplan in order to ensure it was fit for purpose, conforms to the policy framework and reflects responses received to the public consultation.
- 3.2 The revised Masterplan was brought to the Local Plan Committee in August 2016 where its content was endorsed but concerns were raised regarding some aspects of the

presentation and illustrative material. The consultants were asked to address these issues and to prepare a final version. This exercise was completed during summer 2017, ensuring compliance with emerging local plan designations. There is one point of minor divergence with regard to the access to the Mill Road housing site. The Masterplan suggests one or two accesses coming off Mill Road as well as from Axial Way. The Publication Draft provides for access from Axial Way unless other considerations prevent this; the master plan therefore is in general conformity with the emerging Local Plan policy and proposals will need to be designed with the focus on Axial Way as the point of vehicular access.

- 3.3 The intention behind the Masterplan is to help coordinate the development of the Colchester Northern Gateway area so that new design creates a strong sense of place and an attractive, quality destination for inward investment. It is intended that, wherever practical, new development should follow the urban design principles it sets out and conform to local planning policies. It is intended to form a material consideration as planning applications are brought forward for the Northern Gateway.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Having agreed the previous version of the Masterplan the alternative option is not to endorse the final amended version as a material consideration. This would undermine the usefulness of the Masterplan as an aid to co-ordination, to setting out good urban design principles and to assisting development management. The review enabled a reconsideration of basic principles in the light of evolving aspirations and a strengthening of the value of the Masterplan as a tool. It has assisted as evidence in applications for external funding for example for infrastructure such as the central boulevard feature. Without the amended Masterplan the evidence base would be diluted and the marketing of the area and co-ordination of planning aspects undermined. The strongly preferred option therefore is to agree the final version of the Masterplan.

#### **5. Background Information**

- 5.1 In August 2016 the revised Masterplan was presented to the Local Plan Committee, where it was endorsed as a document that would be adopted as guidance. The revision was of the original and out-of-date Masterplan which was agreed in 2014 following a period of consultation.
- 5.2 While the Masterplan was endorsed in August 2016, the Committee expressed concerns regarding the presentation and there were some elements of the Masterplan which were out of date with the Draft Local Plan. These aspects of the plan have now been updated and are presented to the Local Plan Committee as a final version.
- 5.3 A Public Realm document for the Northern Gateway was also subsequently produced to provide a Vision of the Northern Gateway as a 'place' and to provide a landscape context for the public realm and site layout. It is intended that this will be a companion advisory document, to be used to ensure there is a comprehensive scheme of public realm throughout the Northern Gateway.

#### **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared for the Northern Gateway Sports Project. This EQIA is also relevant to the master planning work. The link to this is:  
<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12745/Policy-and-Corporate>

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The scheme will “Promote Colchester to attract further inward investment and additional businesses, providing greater and more diverse employment and tourist opportunities”
- 7.2 The scheme will “Regenerate our Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure” by providing a new high quality destination, together with employment growth.
- 7.3 The proposed development will support the Council’s objective to “Create the right environment for people to develop and flourish in all aspects of life both business and pleasure”.
- 7.4 The preferred development is expected to “Promote Colchester’s heritage and wide ranging tourism attractions to enhance our reputation as a destination”
- 7.5 It is anticipated that the preferred scheme will make a significant contribution to the Council’s wish to “Cultivate Colchester’s green spaces and opportunities for health, wellbeing and the enjoyment of all”

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 There was extensive consultation on the first draft of the Masterplan. Since that time the Council has shared the emerging draft principles with key sports and community stakeholders as part of the engagement process for the Northern gateway sports project as a whole. No further public consultation on the Masterplan is proposed at this stage.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 None directly though the Masterplan is referenced as a requirement in the Publication Draft Local Plan.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 None arising directly from the Masterplan though implementing some of the design ideas such as the boulevard may involve the Council in infrastructure expenditure and for which funding applications have been submitted.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 The landscape proposals and design of the public realm will be subject to community safety scrutiny to ensure there are no intimidating spaces or areas unlit that become vulnerable; the buildings will include safety and surveillance provision.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

- 12.1 Development of the Northern Gateway will provide significant opportunity to help address the health and well-being of the existing and new communities. It will provide a range of opportunities for sport, recreational and health outdoor activity.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 The mechanism of the Masterplan to provide a comprehensive approach to the planning and sustainable development of the Northern Gateway will reduce the risk of

inappropriate and unco-ordinated development. The Masterplan serves to promote the high quality of design and innovation the Council expects in this major growth area.

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Colchester Northern Gateway Masterplan

Appendix 2 Landscape Public Realm Strategy