

Council Response to Inspectors Request for Further Information regarding Phasing and Car Parking

Council Response to the 'Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document

1 Introduction

- 1.1 During discussion regarding Matter 3 at the Hearing in relation to the Oadby and Wigston Town Centres Area Action Plan, discussion took place in relation to the phasing of the Brooksby Square allocation. This Statement sets out the Council's response to the Inspectors request for the Council to consider a suggested change in relation to the phasing of Brooksby Square and the Council's response in relation to the 'Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document that was prepared by the Inspector.
- 1.2 None of the suggested changes referred to in this document have been included in the Schedule of Town Centres Area Action Plan Examination Suggest Changes. The Inspector's response to this document is awaited first.

2 Council response to the Inspector' suggestion to amend the Phasing of Brooksby Square

- 2.1 In the submitted version of the Area Action Plan Brooksby Square had been identified to come forward in Phase 1. However, during discussion the Inspector suggested that this be moved to Phase 3. There were two main issues under debate in relation to Brooksby Square – a reduction in the number of public car parking spaces currently available on East Street car park and the information provided in relation to the viability and deliverability of the Brooksby Square allocation in the Delivery Strategy.
- 2.2 In the Hearing Session, the Inspector asked the Council to give further consideration in relation to this suggested change. However, the Inspector has also outlined how this suggested change might appear in the Area Action Plan (to the extent that it was discussed in the Hearing Session) as SC22 in the 'Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document so this section needs to be read in the context of the whole of this Statement.

Issue

- Moving the phasing of the Brooksby Square proposal from Phase 1 to Phase 3 would delay the Council's ability to prioritise the delivery of housing growth in Oadby. The National Planning Policy Framework refers to the need to achieve sustainable development 'without delay' and to 'proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver [the] homes...'. Neither would it be in the spirit of 'Laying the Foundations – A housing Strategy for England (November 2011)'
- Moving the phasing of the Brooksby Square proposal from Phase 1 to Phase 3 would also mean that Phase 1 would consist only of the ERDF match funded public realm works to The Parade, and no private sector led inward investment into Oadby until Phase 2. This could be seen as a considerable period of inactivity on the part of the Council given the objective to actively achieve the implementation and delivery of the policies in the Area Action Plan in order to realise the regeneration of Oadby town centre; and, the references referred to above in the National Planning Policy Framework and other documents that sustainable housing and economic growth should be prioritised.

Council Response

- 2.3 The main issue affecting the viability of the Brooksby Square proposal in the submitted Area Action Plan is that the Local Infrastructure Plan seeks the development to fund the refurbishment of the whole of East Street car park (Appendix D, page 91).
- 2.4 However, rather than changing the proposed phasing, it is possible to remove the relationship between the Brooksby Square proposal and the refurbishment of East Street car park, and instead to seek the refurbishment work to the car park as part of the Council's general maintenance programme for the car park. This work could in part be linked to the implementation of the Brooksby Square proposal but also scheduled over the plan period.
- 2.5 BE Group has reconsidered the viability of the Brooksby Square proposal excluding refurbishment of East Street car park (and the retail/office development that was proposed on the corner of The Parade/South Street as set out in paragraph 1.17 of the Delivery Strategies Update Paper (document library ref Q6) and discussed at the Hearing Sessions) but including the residential, undercroft car parking, retail, shared use public square and the improvements to the public realm on South Street. This demonstrates that it would be viable to deliver the Brooksby Square proposal in Phase 1. It also notes that the proposal involves land in the Council's control that is readily deliverable. This assessment can be found in Appendix 1 of this report (note: the assessment also includes an appraisal of the Brooksby Square proposal excluding all elements other than Housing to act as a control/comparator).
- 2.6 In addition to the information contained in the BE Group assessment it is also of note that Rowleys Court (a McCarthy and Stone built development on Sandhurst Street, Oadby) was completed in 2011. Between May 2011 to March 2012 a number of the units have been sold, with sold prices ranging from £155,000 to £160,950 for 1 bedroom units and £195,752 to £240,228 for 2 bedroom units. Thus, evidence suggests that recent sold prices for comparable apartment style dwellings within Oadby achieve in excess of the £173,000 suggested for the Brooksby Square development.'
- 2.7 In addition to this, the Council has also responded to the point raised by the Inspector during the Hearing Sessions, that it is usual for Council's that have reached this stage to have given consideration as to how it would propose to release its own land that would be required for development. The Council has responded to this by taking a report to its meeting of Full Council on 26th June 2012 (Appendix 2). At this meeting Members approved the recommendation to *'allow release of any town centre car park land (identified through the Town Centres Area Action Plan) for development on the basis at an initial nil consideration for any appropriate development scheme, and not seek market value at the outset'*. This further demonstrates the Council's commitment to one of the main objectives of the Area Action Plan which is to actively achieve the implementation and delivery of the policies in the Area Action Plan in order to realise the regeneration of Oadby and Wigston town centres.

- 2.8 With regard to car parking, there would be a temporary loss of 21 public car parking spaces if Brooksby Square was delivered prior to Baxters Place. The Inspector asked the Council to contact Asda and Waitrose supermarkets to ascertain whether they would be willing to allow people visiting the town centre to park in their car parks (Appendix 3). A positive response has been received from Asda whereby they would be happy for people visiting the Oadby town centre to use spaces in their car park. Given that Waitrose is a relatively new store that is still growing they do not feel able to offer up any spaces at this time but indicate that they would be willing to review this position in the future. The responses from Asda and Waitrose are contained in Appendix 4 of this report. In addition to this, the Council has given consideration to relining Sandhurst Street car park, where currently a number of spaces are larger than that required by current guidelines (as set out in Government Guidance and applied by the Council's Development Management Team) and where currently the available space is not used to its best potential. This work has indicated that it is possible to provide an extra 17 car parking spaces on Sandhurst Street car park (see Appendix 5). Taken together, the use of the Asda car park and the relining of Sandhurst Street car park would more than make up for the temporary loss of 21 car parking spaces.
- 2.9 Therefore, given that the Council has now demonstrated that with an amendment to the Brooksby Square proposal to remove the refurbishment of East Street car park and that the temporary loss of 21 public car parking space can be made up for elsewhere, the Council believes that the delivery of the Brooksby Square allocation in Phase 1 is Sound and that the suggested changes should reflect this.
- 2.10 However, if this Inspector considers that this approach would be unsound, then the Council would still wish to give consideration to a suggested change along this lines identified by the Inspector in the 'Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document as was confirmed in the Hearing session.

3 Council response to the Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document

- 3.1 The Council has identified the following issues associated with the suggested change as discussed in the Hearing Session and as set out in the 'Council's Suggested Changes Hearing Day 3' document.

Issue

- The suggested change to Policy 17, paragraph 5.50 states that 'the completion of the decked car parking scheme at Baxters Place (policy 19) in phase 2 is critical to the success of subsequent development proposals, some of which will result in the loss of existing public car parking spaces'. In the context of the suggested change to amend the phasing of Brooksby Square (from Phase 1 to Phase 3) the subsequent development proposals referred to in this suggested change is Brooksby Square. The Council would consider that the term 'critical to the success of' is not the case and that 'important' would be a more appropriate term.

- The suggested change to Policy 17, paragraph 5.50 also states that ‘in particular, none of the existing public car parking spaces at East Street will be lost until the new decked car park at Baxters Place has been opened to public use’. The Council considers that this introduces significant inflexibility when in fact there would be other options available for the Council to manage sufficient levels of car parking between the completion of Brooksby Square (assuming it is delivered first) and Baxters Place. Paragraph 2.8 and Appendices 4 and 5 set out how this would be achieved. In addition to this, there is also the potential that other opportunities to provide additional public car parking could arise between now and the commencement of development.

Council Response

- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that the suggested change to Policy 17, paragraph 5.50 is amended to:

the completion of the decked car parking scheme at Baxters Place (policy 19) in phase 2 is ~~critical~~ important to the success of ~~subsequent~~ other development proposals set out in the Area Action Plan, some of which will (when considered individually) result in the loss of existing public car parking spaces. ~~In particular, none of the existing public car parking spaces at East Street will be lost until the new decked car park at Baxters Place has been opened to public use.~~ Therefore, as part of any redevelopment proposal(s) a comprehensive parking management strategy will be required to be put in place prior to the commencement of development to ensure that an appropriate amount of car parking spaces are made available to support the town centre during the construction phase and after completion of the scheme(s). This will allow the flexibility necessary to allow the Council to respond to the needs of the market.

Issue

- The suggested change to Policy 13, paragraph 4.50 states that ‘the completion of the new multi-story car park (MCSP) at Burgess Junction (policy 14) is critical to the success of subsequent development proposals to secure the regeneration of Wigston town centre, some of which will result in the loss of existing public car parking spaces’. The Council would consider that the term ‘critical to the success of’ is not the case and that ‘important’ would be a more appropriate term.
- The suggested change to Policy 13, paragraph 4.50 also states that ‘in particular, none of the existing public car parking spaces at Paddock Street will be lost until the Burgess Junction MSCP has been opened to public use’. The Council recognises that it would be unacceptable to bring forward development on Paddock Street that would reduce the number of public car parking spaces that are available there and then subsequently to close Junction Road car park in order to implement the redevelopment proposals. However, it may be that other options become available that would allow the Council to manage sufficient levels of car parking in the town centre and it is considered that the Area Action Plan should not be so inflexible so as not to allow for such options.

Council Response

- 3.3 It is therefore proposed that the suggested change to Policy 13, paragraph 4.50 is amended to:

the completion of the new multi-story car park (MCSP) at Burgess Junction (policy 14) is ~~critical~~ important to the success of subsequent development proposals to secure the regeneration of Wigston town centre, some of which will result in the loss of existing public car parking spaces. In particular, none of the existing car parking spaces at Paddock Street will be lost until the Burgess Junction MSCP has been opened for public use unless as part of any redevelopment proposal(s) a comprehensive parking management strategy can be put in place prior to the commencement of development that sets out suitable alternative option(s) to ensure that an appropriate amount of car parking spaces are made available to support the town centre during the construction phase and after completion of the scheme(s). This will allow the flexibility necessary to allow the Council to respond to the needs of the market.

Issue

- The suggested change to Appendix D, suggests adding a new paragraph under Phasing.

Council Response

- 3.4 In order to take account of the changes suggested above it is proposed that the suggested change to Policy 13, paragraph 4.50 is amended to:

In Wigston town centre, the Area Action Plan requires the completion of the Burgess Junction MSCP prior to the loss of any existing car parking at Paddock Street. unless as part of any redevelopment proposal(s) a comprehensive parking management strategy can be put in place prior to the commencement of development that sets out suitable alternative option(s) to ensure that an appropriate amount of car parking spaces are made available to support the town centre during the construction phase and after completion of the scheme(s). In Oadby town centre, ~~the AAP requires the completion of the Baxters Place decked car park prior to the loss of any existing car parking at East Street.~~ as part of any redevelopment proposal(s) a comprehensive parking management strategy will be required to be put in place prior to the commencement of development to ensure that an appropriate amount of car parking spaces are made available to support the town centre during the construction phase and after completion of the scheme(s).

Issue

- The suggested change in relation to the Delivery Strategy for Infrastructure Table (pages 87-93) suggests some further amendments to Table 5 in the Council's Situation Update Matter 6, Issue 6.4.

Council Response

3.5 In order to take account of the changes suggested above it is proposed that the suggested change is amended to:

Delivery Strategy for Infrastructure Table, pages 87-93: The table needs to be changed as per Table 5 in the Council’s Situation Update Matter 6, Issue 6.4, with added changes for Oadby as follows: ~~Site 1 phase 3; Brooksby Square (Site 8) — phase 3.~~

Delivery Strategy for Infrastructure

Infrastructure requirements	Site ID	Opportunity site/sites likely to contribute	Funding and Delivery Partners	Indicative timescale for development	Delivery cost (approx)	Implementation Mechanism	Risk	Flexibility
Oadby								
East Street Car Park refurbishment	1	Brooksby	OWBC Developer	Phase 1 / 2 /3	Included within overall build costs of £14.5m To be determined by Council’s programmed maintenance costs	This will need to be delivered as an integral part of the wider development of this site. This will be delivered by the Council as part of the Council regular maintenance regime of car parks	Not attracting a suitable development partner and funding. Impact of cuts to Council’s budgets but the extended phasing period mitigates against this	Delivery as part of a wider scheme and therefore dependent upon the timescale of that. Extended phasing period

Issue

- The suggested change in relation to the phasing plans on pages 83 and 84 suggests some amendments in relation to Oadby town centre.

Council Response

3.6 In order to take account of the changes suggested above it is proposed that the suggested change is amended to:

No changes to Wigston town centre; for Oadby town centre, The Parade and Brooksby Square remains as phase 1, and Baxters Place remains as phase 2, ~~but East Street/ Brooksby Square/ South Street change to phase 3.~~ The area to the south of South Street and The Precinct do not need to be included within the phasing plan.