



Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 22nd July 2024

Report of: Head of Property and Asset Management

Subject: SHRUB HILL QUARTER SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

1. Recommendation

That the Committee: -

- 1.1 Notes the outcome of the statutory public consultation on the draft Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document as set out in this report and the attached Statement of Community Consultation; and**
- 1.2 Recommends that Council adopts the Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document as amended and attached to this report as part of the Local Development Framework.**

2. Background

- 2.1 Supplementary Planning Documents form part of the Local Development Framework and add detail to the policies set out in the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 29th January 2024, this Committee approved a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Shrub Hill Quarter for statutory public consultation. The SPD is one of a number of key workstreams underway at present which lay the foundations for the longer term regeneration of this area of the city centre. A short update on progress on other workstreams is provided later in this report.
- 2.3 The Supplementary Planning Document is a mechanism for ensuring that developers are given clear guidance as to what is expected when they are considering purchasing a site and/or submitting a planning application. It also provides a context within which individual parcels of land can be brought forward for development and identifies those parts of the site on which built development is not expected to take place and the ways in which these spaces will be managed and integrated into the development, thereby providing a coherent and integrated approach to the whole site. In demonstrating a coherent approach to the long-term regeneration of the area, it may also assist in any future funding applications for investment in necessary public infrastructure to overcome delivery and/or viability issues.
- 2.3 The SPD has been prepared by the City Council as the Local Planning Authority with the support of Worcestershire County Council, which is the owner of the Shrub Hill Industrial Estate and is collaborating with the City Council on the regeneration of the area. The exercise has been part funded by the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP).

- 2.4 The boundaries of the SPD fall within the larger Opportunity Zone defined as Shrub Hill in the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Policy SWDP44/4 allocates land for approximately 750 dwellings including student accommodation and extra care development, plus other mixed use/ commercial development to this wider area.
- 2.5 The Opportunity Zone lies east and west of the railway line. About 550 dwellings including student accommodation and residential care housing should be located east of the railway line. Mixed use / commercial development should be developed both east and west of the railway line. (Footnote 129 to policy SWDP44/4). The SPD is consistent with the existing South Worcestershire Development Plan and draft policy SWDP61B (SWDP44/4) page 268) of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR). Once the Development Plan Review is adopted, the SPD will need to be reviewed and re-adopted against SWDPR to keep it up to date and ensure full weight can be given to it when making decisions on planning applications.
- 2.6 The SPD comprises 6 Chapters as set out in the table below with a brief description of each.

	CHAPTER	DESCRIPTION
1	INTRODUCTION	An overview of the aim and purpose of the SPD and the context of the existing planning policy and local plan framework relating to Shrub Hill. Includes a summary of the stakeholder engagement
2	CONTEXT/STORY SO FAR	A recount of the Quarter's strategic location, its transport connections, the remaining industrial heritage and new and planned developments adjacent.
3	VISION AND PRINCIPLES	Highlights the opportunities for new development as well as the constraints and sets out the 6 long term place foundations agreed by Committee last year of Connected, Distinctive, Productive, Sustainable, Inclusive and Disruptive. The creation of a main east west axis between the Station and St Martins Quarter, open spaces, connectivity, protection of strategic view corridors and mixed-use employment/residential development sought rather than high street competing retail.
4	MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE	Guidance provided on 7 themes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement and accessibility strategy • Public Space and landscape strategy • Built form and views, including building heights and typologies • Uses and amenity, suggested distribution of uses across the Quarter • Sustainability and Well Being strategy • Identity and Way Finding strategy

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic strategy <p>The Chapter ends with an Illustrative Master Plan consistent with these strategies which is reproduced in the Appendix.</p>
5	CHARACTER AREAS/ PLOTS GUIDANCE	<p>Five Character Areas are proposed, for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Yard • Upper Yard • Shrub Hill Station • Retail Park • Bus Depot <p>The SPD proposes principles to be incorporated into any future redevelopment of these plots with suggested layouts.</p>
6	DELIVERY AND PHASING	<p>A recognition that only part of the Quarter is in public sector control to be brought forward as the initial phases and that the redevelopment of significant parts is subject to landowners wishing to realise the opportunities presented by the SPD.</p>

2.7 The aim of the SPD is to be ambitious and aspirational, whilst at the same time being pragmatic and affording flexibility for the future. It reflects the approach taken with the City Centre Master Plan which seeks visionary and transformational development, but which acknowledges that delivery is the fundamental part of this process. Above all, the SPD aims to provide some certainty where this is needed and flexibility where this is possible in order to facilitate delivery.

2.8 The statutory consultation period ran for six weeks from 5th February to 18th March. A range of events were held to provide the public with as many inclusive opportunities for responding as possible:-

- Public exhibition
- Digital consultation
- Physical printed consultation
- 2x Stakeholder workshops hosted on Microsoft Teams
- Dedicated email address provided for any queries
- One-to-one meetings with landowners or their representatives
- Webpage dedicated to the SPD, including detailed information about the SPD, the background of the project and the draft SPD available for download.

3. Preferred Option

3.1 A breakdown of consultations, themes and recommended responses by the Council is provided in detail in the Statement of Community Consultation in **Appendix 1**.

3.2 The more significant elements of the feedback and the recommended responses which have been taken into account in the revised SPD in **Appendix 2** are reproduced below:

Feedback	Response
Elgar House and the NHS building should be removed.	Public feedback on Shrub Hill regeneration plans regularly calls for the demolition of Elgar House as an eyesore; however, although aesthetically it may jar with the Victorian railway station it obscures, its condition is not so poor as to be regarded a disamenity. The Councils have been conscious in the drafting of the SPD that proposals should as far as practical be deliverable and that in the absence of public sector ownership of Elgar House and the slim chance of funding for its acquisition and demolition for a public realm scheme, there was a pragmatism in accepting that Elgar House would stay whilst signalling an aspirational outturn.
Demolish Elgar House to enhance views	There are numerous views from Shrub Hill station, even with Elgar House in place. These are carefully identified in the SPD document and protected.
Views from the station should be protected and enhanced to promote a better visitor experience of Worcester	
Creation of Shrub Hill Conservation Area to be considered	It is the intention of the Council to undertake a broader review of conservation areas across the wider authority area. As part of that, an assessment would be undertaken to assess whether a conservation area covering the Shrub Hill quarter would be justified. This will take place post adoption of the SPD. The SPD itself looks to protect heritage assets in the area, and promote high quality design and public realm. Furthermore, heritage assets would generally be protected through the application process anyway.
The retail park is not covered by the site allocation, which brings deliverability into question.	Site allocation is not necessary for inclusion within the SPD boundary. The landowner has not raised any objections to

	the plans shown.
Concerned about the height of buildings throughout being overbearing and causing shadows and wind-tunnelling	The SPD includes a Height Strategy chapter that sets out the principles guiding height and massing in Shrub Hill Quarter, informed by the townscape character of Worcester. Additionally, protected view corridors ensure massing and heights are not visually obtrusive.
Multi-storey car park should be visually unobtrusive and fit in with the local architecture	
Car parking should be spread out across the development, not just in a single multi-storey car park.	The SPD aims for an ambitious car parking strategy, that responds to the centre of town location of Shrub Hill Quarter, as well as the goal for creating a people-friendly environment not dominated by cars. It is expected that in the long-term Shrub Hill Quarter will transition towards the low on-street parking set out by this SPD, especially once a consolidated parking facility comes forward near the station. For more information please see section 4.1 Movement & Accessibility Strategy and the Delivery & Phasing chapter.
Accessible parking should be below ground.	
Parking should be situated at the periphery, with public transport and/or park and ride options.	
Designs for Shrub Hill Road should be further detailed and enhanced.	The SPD now includes more details on the future of Shrub Hill Road in the Delivery & Phasing chapter.
A cycle travel to work percentage of 10 is too low, and should be raised to 20%.	Changed to 20% cycle mode share.
Increased demand on local services needs to be addressed.	Impact of the redevelopment of this area has been considered through the SWDP/SWDP review through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Furthermore, impact on facilities is considered through the applications process and necessary mitigation measures can be secured.
Pedestrian and cycling links to the east of the station should be further considered.	There are limited opportunities to provide pedestrian and cycling links to the east of the station due to physical constraints and land ownership. However, the SPD has been written to support better connectivity in general and should proposals come forward (subject to other material

	considerations), the Council would be supportive of improved links.
An approach to waste should be provided.	This is beyond the scope of the SPD, the SPD has a requirement for service vehicles to be accommodated when it is proposed for the road layout to be altered. Overall the waste strategy is the remit of Worcestershire County Council and is dealt with through the Waste Core Strategy Local Plan, 2012.

- 3.3 The illustrative concept master plan in the draft SPD showed an ideal scenario of the removal of Elgar House and the single storey annexe building in front of Shrub Hill Railway Station and the setting out of this space as a significant area of new public realm. The Character Area Chapter of the draft SPD for the Station retained Elgar House. The owners of Elgar House and the Annexe building have strongly objected through their Agents to the suggestion of the loss of Elgar House and the Annexe.
- 3.4 Neither the City nor the County Council are likely to be in a position to acquire Elgar House, by agreement or otherwise, in the foreseeable future and afford the cost of its demolition. External funding for this purpose, which would not generate any significant net positive land value, is also considered to be remote. Through their Agents, the owners have indicated that they believe Elgar House has a positive asset value and whilst they are willing to develop proposals for its future these will not involve its demolition.
- 3.5 The illustrative concept master plan in the SPD has therefore been amended to show the retention of Elgar House which is confirmed in the Station Character Area chapter. However, the SPD continues to state the Councils' aim of acquiring the Annexe building for the new public realm intended for the approach to the station.
- 3.6 Any future proposals for Elgar House will need to address its appearance, activate the ground floor and ensure that its connections relate to the public realm around it.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council could decide not to prepare an SPD and the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) would continue to be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development within the Quarter. However, the detail provided by the SPD goes beyond the SWDP and by providing a holistic view of regeneration in the Quarter enables the Council to protect the area's heritage, deliver the land uses it is seeking to promote the potential of the Quarter as a centre for innovative and productive employment as well as new housing, and preserve strategic view corridors amongst other matters. Importantly, it provides the opportunity for stakeholders to be involved in the comprehensive and co-ordinated planning of this area in a way that the SWDP doesn't and sets out the City Council and County Council's vision for the Quarter as they begin to seek developer and funding interest in its long-term regeneration.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Should Council accept the Committee's recommendation to adopt the SPD, the Council must make available the SPD and an Adoption Statement setting out-

(a) the date on which a supplementary planning document was adopted,

if applicable, any modifications made pursuant to section 23(1) of the Act,

(b) that any person with sufficient interest in the decision to adopt the supplementary planning document may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for judicial review of that decision, and

that any such application must be made promptly and in any event not later than 3 months after the date on which the supplementary planning document was adopted;

6. Shrub Hill Regeneration Progress Update

6.1 Towns Fund Projects

Isaac Maddox House Enterprise Centre

Proposals for the reuse of the building have been developed to RIBA Stage 3 and a planning application has been submitted. Works are underway to remove asbestos containing materials and to strip out the interior of the building to derisk the next phase of refurbishment. The County Council has recently put these works out to tender.

Public Realm

The City Council now has a confirmed Compulsory Purchase Order which removes land acquisition from being a barrier to implementing the proposed scheme for a new shared use route from the canal bridge at the foot of Cromwell Street to Pheasant Street. Planning permission was granted in September 2023. One plot of land has already been acquired and negotiations for the acquisition of title and rights are underway with the remaining owners. Technical design of the scheme is progressing.

Both these projects are on track to be delivered by the Towns Fund deadline of March 31st 2025.

6.2 Developer Procurement

The County Council is gearing up to begin the procurement of a developer for the Lower Yard and future opportunities at Shrub Hill. The opportunity was launched at UKREIFF in May and Savills have been appointed as advisors.

Demolition of the canalside engineering works will begin in September, preparing this part of the Lower Yard for residential development.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership has agreed to contribute £35k to the cost of developing the SPD.

In February 2023, the City and County Councils signed a Memorandum of Understanding with London and Continental Railways (LCR), a Government owned property company with a remit set by the Department of Transport for promoting regeneration around transport nodes. LCR has funded the procurement of several studies at its own cost, including the balance of costs for the preparation of the SPD, pending the development of a Business Case for wider participation in the regeneration of Shrub Hill, which will be subject to both Councils' agreement.

7.2 Legal and Governance Implications

As explained above, following adoption, there is a further 3 month period in which any legal challenge could be initiated.

7.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant risks associated with the preparation and adoption of the SPD. Preparation and adoption will have followed all relevant processes and procedures and has involved key stakeholders.

7.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

There are no significant corporate/policy implications associated with the preparation and adoption of the SPD.

7.5 Equality Implications

An equalities assessment has been undertaken and it is not believed that any groups or persons are unequally affected by the SPD proposals.

7.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no significant human resource implications associated with the preparation and adoption of the SPD.

7.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no significant health and safety implications associated with the preparation and adoption of the SPD.

7.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The regeneration of the area envisaged by the SPD is expected to have significant social, environmental and economic implications through land use change and the provision of new housing and employment opportunities. The SPD emphasises the desire to achieve this in a sustainable way.

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Background Papers: Place and Economic Development Committee, 29th January 2024
Report to Place and Economic Development Committee 23 January 2023, Regeneration of Shrub Hill

Appendix 1 - Statement of Community Consultation
Appendix 2 - Shrub Hill Quarter Supplementary Planning Document