
HOCKLEY AREA ACTION PLAN – DRAFT PRE-SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' approval of the Hockley Area Action Plan pre-submission document (HAAP). Subject to comments from Members, the draft pre-submission plan will be referred to a special meeting of Full Council on 27 November 2012 to approve the plan for pre-submission consultation and subsequently for submission. A copy of the plan has been dispatched to Members under separate cover.
- 1.2 The pre-submission consultation period will last for a period of eight weeks (to allow for the Christmas period) and consultees will be invited to submit representations in respect of the document's soundness. Following this consultation the HAAP, together with the results of the pre-submission consultation, appraisals and other evidence base documents (including summaries of the results of previous community involvement), will be submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Rochford District Council is committed to preparing Area Action Plans (AAP) for its three main centres of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. The AAPs will form part of the statutory development plan for Rochford District.
- 2.2 The HAAP focuses on guiding the development of Hockley centre, as well as adjoining light industrial areas and the railway station, during the current plan period to 2026.
- 2.3 The Rochford Core Strategy states that the Hockley Area Action Plan will deliver the following:-
 - A safe and high quality environment for residents;
 - Enhanced retail offer for Hockley;
 - Re-development of Eldon Way/Foundry for a variety of uses more appropriate for a town centre location, including residential, commercial, employment and leisure;
 - A public space within a defined centre;
 - Improved connectivity between retail focus and train station;
 - Re-development of industrial uses for retail, leisure and residential development; and
 - Green landscaping along Main Road, Spa road and Southend Road to enhance the visual amenity.

- 2.4 Once adopted, the HAAP will be used as a framework for the future development of Hockley and in the determination of planning applications. It will be subject to the normal processes of monitoring and review.
- 2.5 This version of the plan will – once agreed by Council – be subject to a period of public consultation lasting at least six weeks (the statutory period – note eight proposed to allow for Christmas) during which interested parties will be invited to make representations. It will then be submitted, alongside any representations received and other supporting documents, to the Secretary of State who will make arrangements for an Examination in Public by an independent Planning Inspector. The HAAP will be measured against the established tests of soundness and the Inspectorate will then issue a report with findings and decision. If it is found sound – with or without modifications – the HAAP can then be adopted.

3 PRODUCTION OF THE HOCKLEY AREA ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The draft HAAP has been through a number of iterations, and been the subject of community involvement throughout its production.
- 3.2 In 2009 an Issues and Options Report was published. This provided a baseline urban design analysis and described Hockley's strengths and weaknesses. A number of options for future change in Hockley were considered. The Issues and Options report was subject to consultation and community involvement, the results of which indicated there was some concern as to the proposed level of intervention for the centre of Hockley, and the impact this would have on the village character of the settlement.
- 3.3 Having regard to the feedback received in 2009, an Options Report was produced in 2010, which proposed a range of options for the future of Hockley, varying in degree of intervention. The three options were:-
1. Low intervention: A series of minimal interventions, with a focus on improving pedestrian links, car parking, the public realm and shop fronts, as well as the replacement of some poor quality buildings with new shops.
 2. Medium intervention: A programme of higher level interventions, which would involve the replacement of poor quality buildings, including some existing light industrial uses, consolidation and expansion of leisure uses on Eldon Way industrial estate, re-development of retail uses on Main Road, and a strong pedestrian link between the railway station and the Hockley Trading Estate.
 3. High intervention: The highest level of interventions, including substantial re-development of the Eldon Way and adjoining buildings fronting Spa Road to create a new leisure and retail space, the relocation of the existing health centre to form a community hub on Southend Road, and new housing north of the rail line.

- 3.4 Transport options were also considered.
- 3.5 The 2010 Options Report was subject to consultation and community involvement. A summary of the results of this consultation was published on the Council's website. Views were mixed, but in general there was, again, a strong view that it was important to retain the character of Hockley and there were concerns that the higher levels of intervention would not achieve this, in addition to concerns in respect of infrastructure.
- 3.6 The 2010 Options Report was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (the role of Sustainability Appraisal is discussed in greater detail below). In short, the Sustainability Appraisal of the 2010 Options Report found that medium intervention option, and the high intervention option, will have the strongest positive effects for communities and the economy through providing for a higher level of intervention and therefore regeneration of the centre, provided that phasing and other mitigation measures could be built-in to minimise disruption through noise and traffic congestion during the construction of any new developments.
- 3.7 Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners – a specialist planning and regeneration consultancy practice – were commissioned to produce the draft pre-submission version of the Plan, having regard to the results of community involvement and appraisal of previous iterations of the Plan.
- 3.8 As part of the production of this draft, further community involvement was recently undertaken. The results of this community involvement have been published on the Council's website and have been fed into the development of the Plan.
- 3.9 The draft Plan identifies the following factors as being of particular importance:-
- Provision to meet local shopping need;
 - Excellent public realm;
 - A high quality natural environment;
 - Housing for local people; and
 - Local employment opportunities.

From this, a framework and a range of policies have been suggested.

4 ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

- 4.1 Sustainability Appraisal is an important part of the plan making process. It assesses the environmental, economic and social implications of policies and options in the production of plans. The Sustainability Appraisal forms part of the evidence base for the HAAP and, alongside other evidence, is issued to aid decision-making.

- 4.2 Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken for 2010 Options Report iteration of the HAAP. This appraisal is published on the Council's website. In summary, in relation to the spatial options, the Sustainability Appraisal of the 2010 Options Report found:-
- Both the medium intervention option, (Option 2 including Option 2a) and the high intervention option, (Option 3 including Option 3a) will have the strongest positive effects for communities and the economy through providing for a higher level of intervention and therefore regeneration of the town centre.
 - Both Options 2 and 3 will also provide for a more significant volume of new housing (and in particular Option 3) therefore choosing either of these options would help to meet housing need in Hockley.
 - All options are likely to have positive benefits for health, accessibility and landscape and health, due to the strong focus on movement and public realm, traffic and parking. The improvements to streetscapes, access to the station and new walkways will all help to improve accessibility and provide alternatives to car travel.
 - Whilst Options 2 and 3 are preferred from a regeneration and economic perspective, both (and particularly Option 3) are more likely to have an adverse effect through increased disruption (noise and congestion) and air pollution during the construction phase of development. If either of these 2 options are selected, then it is recommended that the AAP includes consideration of phasing and other mitigation issues (traffic and construction management plans) and consultation with the local community and business owners to minimise the effects of new development.
- 4.3 It should be noted that the policies and proposals set out in the draft pre-submission plan will be subject to sustainability appraisal in their own right. However, it is relevant to note that in terms of scale of intervention suggested in the draft pre-submission HAAP, the proposals are aligned to the medium intervention options (Options 2 and 2a).

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The draft Hockley Area Action Plan pre-submission document will be reported to a special meeting of Full Council on 27 November 2012.
- 5.2 If accepted by Full Council, it is proposed the HAAP will then be subject to a further round of public consultation for a formal period of eight-weeks, running until 25 January 2013. This is a formal consultation stage where respondents are invited to comment on soundness and legal compliance. It should be noted that the usual period for consultation is six weeks. The regulations do allow for this period to be extended, and given that the consultation will

straddle the Christmas period, it is considered appropriate to run the consultation for eight weeks, to account for this.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Production of the HAAP, including next stages, can be achieved through existing allocated resources.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The HAAP will have an impact on the District's environment, and the centre of Hockley in particular.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL**

- (1) That the draft Hockley Area Action Plan Pre-Submission Document be accepted for pre-submission consultation, followed by formal submission to the Secretary of State.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, to make minor amendments to the document prior to submission to the Secretary of State, excluding those that would materially alter policy, having regard to the results of pre-submission consultation, in order to ensure soundness of the submission document.

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