

Report to Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

9 February 2023

Subject:	Friar Park Urban Village
Director:	Director Regeneration and Growth Tony McGovern
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the attached report, in particular, the outcomes of the public consultation and the amendments made to the Friar Park Masterplan in response.




2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To ensure adequate scrutiny has been given the outcomes of the public consultation and the amendments made to the draft masterplan.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people The masterplan includes an area for a possible expansion to the Millennium Centre. This would help support additional services to support children and young people in Friar Park.
	People live well and age well The masterplan proposes a net increase in publicly accessible open space providing areas for people to walk and spend time outside.



	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <p>The masterplan sets out the approach to delivering high-quality homes that integrate in to the existing Friar Park area.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p>The regeneration of the site will bring a vacant and underused site back in to active economic use.</p>
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell</p> <p>The masterplan sets out how the site connects to existing services such a rail and bus provision and how sustainable travel solutions could be incorporated in to the site.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background

4.2 The Friar Park site (Friar Park Urban Village project) is approximately 26 hectares in size, in the north of Sandwell, close to its border with Walsall. It is in dual ownership with the Council owning approximately 14 hectares and the other 12 hectares (approximately) owned by WMCA.

4.3 The site is allocated for residential use in planning policy (Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document). The site is also largely designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC).

4.4 SLINCS are designations applied to sites that are considered locally important in relation to their ecological or geological value. These sites do not meet the criteria to be considered Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) but are still important in the locality. Unlike, SINC, SLINCS have no statutory protection other than that provided in planning policy. Development of a SLINC is permissible subject to the strategic benefits of the scheme (such as the strategic need for housing) outweighing the loss of the SLINC and subject to appropriate mitigation measures being provided. It is proposed to work with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT) to determine the appropriate mitigation and the BBCWT were consulted on the draft Friar Park masterplan.

4.5 The Friar Park site is currently the largest residential development opportunity in the borough and the indicative masterplan suggest that



c.630 homes could be achieved on the site as well as significant areas of landscaping and open space. A number of technical reports have been commissioned to inform the masterplan and ensure the proposals within it reflect technical requirements – these include;

- Initial air quality assessment
- Phase 1 habitat survey and arboriculture assessment
- Ground condition report
- Initial noise assessment
- Baseline transport report
- Flood risk and drainage strategy
- Utility reports

4.7 The annual housing delivery target (based on local housing need) in Sandwell is c.1467 new dwellings per annum. The c.630 units on the Friar Park site would make a significant contribution to those targets although delivery would be over a number of years. A minimum of 25% of the new homes would be affordable in accordance with planning policy.

4.8 Friar Park is an area with high levels of deprivation and the Friar Park Urban Village Scheme represents a significant opportunity for SMBC to deliver high-quality, affordable and efficient homes (up to modern building regulation standards as a minimum) that would have a transformational impact on the area.

4.9 The site is highly constrained and suffers not only from the low levels of land values shared across other areas of Sandwell, but also acutely suffers from high levels of land remediation required to bring forward development. Primarily this is a result of the former uses of the site which included a Severn Trent sewage works. Costs to accommodate these works are significant.

4.10 **The Masterplan Consultation**

4.11 Delegated Authority to undertake community consultation on the Friar Park Masterplan was sought from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth on 27th October 2022. A briefing note was provided to the Chair of ESTE Scrutiny Board on 25th October 2022.

4.12 The consultation methods were as follows;



- Key Stakeholder Meeting – 2nd November 2022
- 6 weeks public consultation commencing 7th November 2022 and ending 16th December 2022.
- A dedicated Friar Park web-site showcasing the masterplan and consultation with an electronic feedback form.
- 2 drop-in sessions at the Millennium Centre in Friar Park to enable residents to discuss proposals with officers – Friday 25th and Saturday 26th November 2022.

4.13 The public consultation period was advertised via Sandwell Council Facebook, letter drops to all residents in the Friar Park ward plus residents living on the nearby Navigation Lane development (on the opposite side of the Walsall Road), and by press release.

4.14 The Key Stakeholder Meeting was attended by 9 people; 3 Sandwell MBC Councillors, 3 members of the Wednesbury Action Group, 2 representatives from the Millennium Centre (Local Community Centre), plus a representative from the Friar Park Allotment Association.

4.15 The two- week community consultation resulted in 57 responses. 38 responses were via the feedback form on the website, 10 were via hard copy feedback forms, 8 were via email, and one via letter.

4.16 The number of responses is considered low given the methods used to publicise the consultation period.

4.17 **The Masterplan Consultation Outcomes**

4.18 The draft consultation outcome report is appended at Appendix A. It shows the results of the consultation on a question by question basis. It also reproduces all comments captured on forms submitted by the local community – however where these comments could identify the individual submitting them Officers has redacted this information.

4.19 The consultation showed that 50% of respondents (24 people) agreed with the draft masterplan, with a further 25% (12 people) not sure, and 25% (12 people) not supportive.

4.20 63% of respondents supported or strongly supported the landscape proposals in the masterplan with a further 16% opposed or strongly



opposed – the remainder of respondents were either neutral (10%) or didn't respond to that question (4%).

- 4.21 In response to the question, how supportive are you of the approach to the location of houses and character areas, 46% of respondents supported or strongly supported the proposals, with 31% either opposed or strongly opposed. A further 19% were neutral and 4% did not respond.
- 4.22 52% of respondents agreed with the masterplans approach to pedestrian and cycle access, 21% disagreed, a further 23% were not sure, and 4% did not answer. 52% of people agreed with the road layout and access points, 21% disagreed, 23% were not sure, and 4% did not respond.
- 4.23 Some of the key themes that can be drawn from the comments received in the consultation and key stakeholder meeting include;

- Concerns about the development leading to more ASB in the area.
- Concerns that the Millennium Centre is already too small to meet existing community needs.
- Some residents wanted to see higher levels of affordable housing provision (above the minimum 25% set in the Masterplan) that was locally let whilst others felt that Friar Park has too much affordable housing provision already. Overall the balance of comments was towards providing higher levels of affordable homes.
- Concerns that the existing school and GP provision is insufficient to meet demands and that additional residential properties would exacerbate the issue.
- There was a mixed view on the open space with some residents asking for even more open space and less housing, and others feeling that the open space would be a magnet for anti-social behaviour and housing should be maximised. There was support from local community groups (Scouts, Millennium Centre, Allotments Association) to the open space strategy.
- Sustainable drainage solutions (swales), enhancing biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable travel solutions in the design of the scheme was raised (cycle parking and electric car infrastructure).
- There were also several comments about specific impacts on existing homes such as access arrangements/ privacy concerns/ need for boundary treatment to prevent ASB to existing areas.



- Some concerns were raised about noise, dust, and pollution from the sites situation close to the motorway and adjacent to the railway.
- Some concerns were raised about the impact of additional traffic on the highway network and the impact of construction traffic.
- Several comments were supportive of the scheme and felt the scheme provided an opportunity to improve the area.
- There were some comments that did not support the scheme and requests that the site is left as it is and that the scheme is too costly.

4.24 Response to concerns and the Proposed Changes to the Draft Masterplan

4.25 In terms of local facilities and the impact on schools, once planning permission has been granted for residential development, Education will build the additional housing into their projections for future school places. For a housing development of circa 630 properties, Government guidance indicates that approximately 230 school aged children may reside in the new housing. Current school population trends and projections for the forthcoming years indicate that the local area will see an overall reduction in the number of school places required from existing housing, which will provide sufficient capacity for any new families that move into the area. Therefore, it is not considered that the scheme will have an adverse impact on school provision.

4.26 In terms of GP and dentistry provision, the Black Country Integrated Care Board (BCICB), (previously Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commission Group (CCG)) has been consulted on the proposals. There are currently ten GP surgeries and five dentistry practices within two kilometres of the proposed site, the nearest being the Tame Valley Medical Centre on Friar Park Road and Crankhall Lane Dental Practice and The Village Medical Centre. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has confirmed that there is scope to expand other existing facilities in the catchment area and there is not a requirement to provide a new facility as part of the development. Additional capacity would be funded either via a commuted sum secured through s.106 planning agreement or, if the scheme is proven unviable, would be funded from the NHS directly.



- 4.27 The masterplan is in the process of being amended to address the concerns raised by residents wherever reasonably practical. It will provide the option of additional space for an extension to the Millennium Centre. Further work will be required on determining the costs of any extension and the funding mechanism for any extension.
- 4.28 The masterplan will reflect some of the specific concerns raised by residents directly impacted on by the proposed scheme. These changes will include; an additional private access to allow residents in Kent Road to continue to access their properties as they do now, reorientation of some plots where residents raised concerns over proximity and overlooking, and the removal of an additional access between the existing play area on Friar Park Road and existing residential area of Manifold Way where concerns were raised about ASB.
- 4.29 The masterplan wording is being strengthened to provide more emphasis around the need to ensure the final design of the scheme gives full consideration to ASB particularly by restricting access to the open space by dirt bikes and considering appropriate locations for CCTV.
- 4.30 The masterplan is being amended to positively encourage sustainable development, EV charging points, and sustainable travel measures. Following consultation with TfWM the masterplan has also been amended to include the potential for buses to be routed through the new development.
- 4.31 The design code within the masterplan is being strengthened ensure each character area within the masterplan is clearly defined and a high-quality design-led development can be achieved.
- 4.32 Some matters raised in the public consultation will not be addressed in the Masterplan as these require detailed discussions with the end-developer and/ or are influenced by viability considerations that are not yet fully understood at this masterplan stage. These include;
- Issues around construction traffic and mitigation.
 - The provision of more than the minimum 25% affordable housing set out in planning policy.
 - The tenure of the affordable housing.



5 Implications

Resources:	There are no financial implications from adopting/ approving the masterplan.
Legal and Governance:	None
Risk:	None
Equality:	No identified negative impacts on equality/ protected characteristics from bringing the Friar Park site forward for redevelopment.
Health and Wellbeing:	The masterplan provides a net increase in publicly accessible open space and increases opportunities for outside activity.
Social Value:	It will be a requirement of any end developer to meet the council's social value requirements and officers will work with the end developer to confirm outcomes such as employment and apprentices.
Climate Change:	The masterplan sets out the need for developers to bring forward a development which is sustainable. It also highlights the need for sustainable travel and EV charging points.

6 Appendices

Consultation outcome report

7. Background Papers

Draft Masterplan for Friar Park available via;

<https://www.friarparkurbanvillage.co.uk/phase-2-consultation/the-masterplan-proposals/>

