

# Report to Cabinet

**9 February 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Regeneration and Growth Cllr Iqbal Padda
<b>Director:</b>	Director Regeneration and Growth Tony McGovern
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes significant effect on two or more Wards
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Planning Regeneration Team Leader, Hayley Insley Hayley_Insley@sandwell.gov.uk

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet consider the results of the consultation undertaken on the Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan during October to December 2021 as set out in the Consultation Report.
- 1.2 That Cabinet is recommended to approve the Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan as amended, and for both documents to be treated as a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Draft Smethwick to Birmingham Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan were presented to Cabinet in June 2021 for consultation. However, prior to consultation being undertaken, amendments were requested from Birmingham City Council in the capacity of our joint partner for this project. Following this revision, both documents were presented to Cabinet again on 29 September 2021 for authority to consult. It was also

recommended that a further report be presented to Cabinet with the results of the consultation in due course. Consultation is now complete and both documents have been amended to take into account relevant amendments. This report requests that both documents are approved to assist with guiding decisions on future development proposals in the area.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<b>Best start in life for children and young people</b> Proposals within the Area Framework and Masterplan consider the need for new education facilities
	<b>People live well and age well</b> New housing proposed within the area will seek to address the needs of all members of the community and include improved public realm and green spaces, improved transport links and access to facilities and increase employment opportunities.
	<b>Strong resilient communities</b> New housing proposed within the area will seek to address the needs of all members of the community and include improved public realm and green spaces, improved transport links and access to facilities and increase employment opportunities.
	<b>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</b> The Masterplan seeks to attract a range of house types and tenures that are sustainable and will meet the needs and demands of the future residents.
	<b>A strong and inclusive economy</b> Sites that could assist in delivering new jobs and learning opportunities are identified within the Area Framework. Improvements to transport connections will improve residents' ability to access key transport hubs and hence their access to employment and education prospects and will contribute to attracting and retaining businesses in Sandwell.
	<b>A connected and accessible Sandwell</b> The Area Framework identifies a transport strategy that aims to consider current and future transport needs and promoting alternative safe and convenient modes of transport other than the private motor car, including new cycling and walking routes.

## **4 Context and Key Issues**

- 4.1 The regeneration corridor between Smethwick and Birmingham contains significant sites for future regeneration. Smethwick will see transformation through the opening of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital next year, as well as several projects being promoted for education, training, new housing and improvements to walking and cycling connectivity via the Towns Fund programme. Birmingham also has sites coming forward that will deliver significant housing growth, including Port Loop and City Hospital once this site becomes available.
- 4.2 The Rolfe Street and Grove Lane areas will be key to introducing new much needed housing in Smethwick, with new or improved cycle and walking routes assisting in promoting an alternative mode of transport for those working, living and visiting the area.
- 4.3 The Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Area Framework sets the guiding principles for bringing these opportunities sites forward that promote this area as a place that people want to live in now and in the future, which is well connected with sustainable transport choices and where access to the heritage and green space is maximised and where new communities can be created.
- 4.4 There are six main guiding principles within the Area Framework to guide the delivery of the vision and the corridor's contribution to achieve net zero and inclusive growth; Healthy centres, A new hospital as an anchor institution, a green corridor, an active transport exemplar, green new neighbourhoods and healthy sense of place.
- 4.5 In addition, a Masterplan for the area surrounding the new hospital at Grove Lane has been prepared that provides additional guidance on the amount and type of new housing that could be accommodated, linkages and green spaces and the additional infrastructure such as a new primary school.
- 4.6 These documents have been commissioned jointly by Sandwell Council and Birmingham City Council, with partners West Midlands Combined Authority/Transport for West Midlands and Homes England. Engagement with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Hospitals Trust and Canal & River Trust has also shaped both the Area Framework and Masterplan.

- 4.7 Following approval to consult last September, consultation commenced on 18 October, initially for a period of six weeks. The documents were put on the respective local authority webpages as well as having its own dedicated webpage managed by the consultants. Information about the consultation was cascaded via a range of means including the use of social media (Twitter and Facebook), presentation and updates to Ward Members Board and reference at Smethwick Town Deal Local Board meetings. Documents were placed within Council offices at Woodcock Street and in Spring Hill Library and Smethwick Library and at Sandwell Council House. Flyers advertising the consultation were also provided to the libraries to be distributed to persons expressing interest. A3 Posters advertising the consultation were put up in the foyer of the Tesco superstore on Dudley Road, the foyer of the Summerfield Community Centre and at Sandwell Council House.
- 4.8 In addition, officers staffed public consultation events at Lidl on Dudley Road in Birmingham on Wednesday 3 November 2021, and outside Smethwick Council House on Saturday 20 November 2021 to raise awareness of the consultation. The documents were also presented to Birmingham City Council's Edgbaston Ward Forum on 15 November 2021. To enable further engagement, an additional 750 flyers were posted to properties in Winson Green and the consultation period extended for an additional week to 3 December 2021.

### **Results of consultation**

- 4.9 At the end of the consultation period, we had received responses from 39 people and organisations comprising 14 emails/letters and 25 who responded to the online questionnaire. A further 30 residents registered to receive additional information during the consultation period although they did not complete an online questionnaire.
- 4.10 The main points raised during the consultation are summarised below:
- There was support from several respondents to improving biodiversity within the corridor and more detail was sought on this.

- There was a high level of support from respondents for active travel improvements, including reallocation of space away from motorised vehicles/parking.
- A number of respondents sought clarification on future plans for bus routes linked to the new hospital.
- There were divergent views on densities. Some responses considered densities to be too high whereas others considered them too low.
- There was support from several respondents for retaining historic buildings in the area and the contribution these could make to regeneration. Some respondents sought a stronger commitment to the retention of such buildings.
- Some respondents sought greater clarity as to the intended planning status of the Corridor Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan. Some respondents raised the issue of consistency with the new Black Country Plan (in Sandwell Borough).

A number of respondents expressed support for a new railway station in the corridor. A number of respondents highlighted issues with levels of traffic and parking. There was considerable support for active travel provision

### **Changes resulting from consultation responses**

4.11 In response to the representations the following principal changes have been made (additional changes are detailed in the responses to individual comments below):

- New text added to both the Framework and the Masterplan to make clear their planning status.
- Additional references to biodiversity have been incorporate into the Framework City Hospital section and expansion of the 'Green Corridor' text on Framework page 33.
- A number of the maps in the Framework were amended to clarify the identification of non-designated heritage assets.

- The cycle network map in the Framework has been updated to fully reflect the Dudley Road Improvement Scheme.

Further details of the representations and how they have shaped the final Corridor Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan are provided in the Consultation Statement.

## **Next steps**

- 4.12 The Area Framework and Grove Lane Masterplan sets the vision for future development within this regeneration corridor. As such, some of the future aspirations for land use are not in line with the adopted local plan comprising the Black Country Core Strategy and Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. Therefore, they are unable to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents until such time as the Black Country Core Strategy has been reviewed and adopted. However, the proposed land uses within these documents are aligned with those set out in the Black Country Plan review currently in process.
- 4.13 It is therefore proposed for Sandwell to endorse both documents which will enable them to be used as a material consideration to guide future proposed developments that may come forward within the corridor area in Sandwell. As there are no policy changes with regards the Birmingham City Council Local Plan, it is intended that the Corridor Area Framework will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the City Council.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Masterplan for the Grove Lane area sets in more detail, the vision for future development in this area. It provides more insight to developers and landowners in what type of development could positively contribute to the wider area regeneration. Not progressing with the masterplan may lead to unconnected, piecemeal development that would lack cohesiveness and not provide for connectivity to the wider area and the creation of new, related communities.
- 5.2 Similarly, the progression of the Corridor Area Framework ensures consistency between the two local authorities within this important regeneration corridor in achieving the provision of good quality housing that is well connected to sustainable transport links, open space and the canal network. The guiding principles also assists in contributing to the vision for this area in creating a healthy place to live, work and visit and contributing to net zero and inclusive growth. Without the Area Framework to direct appropriate development for the opportunity sites and the related transport strategy to focus on sustainable transport, development within the corridor may not achieve the vision set out by the respective local authorities and partner agencies for the regeneration transformation this area could achieve.



## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The Area Framework and Masterplan preparation has been developed by consultants funded by Birmingham City Council, Sandwell Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and Homes England and supported by officers within these authorities and agency. The proposals contained within these documents will assist in bringing forward some landholdings within public sector ownership
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	There are no direct legal implications in relation to this report. The Area Framework and Masterplan will be informal non-statutory documents.
<b>Risk:</b>	There are no direct implications with regard to risk in relation to this report. All consultation was undertaken in line with any Covid restrictions currently in place at the time to ensure safety was maintained. No indoor meetings were proposed due to the potential of infection from Covid.
<b>Equality:</b>	An EIA has not been carried out. The Masterplan does not create policy, it sets out the expected direction of travel of emerging policy, and can be a material planning consideration when determining applications
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Area Framework and Masterplan will offer a range of health and wellbeing benefits through improving and developing new sustainable homes and public spaces, providing associated infrastructure to support new communities being created and assets and places for people to go and improvements to infrastructure including cycling and walking routes.
<b>Social Value</b>	The opportunities identified within the Area Framework and Masterplan will acknowledge how inclusive economic growth may be achieved.

## 7. Appendices

Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Area Framework  
Grove Lane Masterplan  
Consultation Statement





## 8. Background Papers

None

