

Birmingham City Council

Report to the Leader and the Director, Inclusive Growth

10th May 2019



Subject: PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT REA VALLEY
URBAN QUARTER SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT

Report of: Director, Inclusive Growth
**Relevant Cabinet
Member:** Councillor Ian Ward, Leader

Relevant O &S Chair(s): Councillor Tahir Ali, Economy and Skills

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Are specific wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Bordesley and Highgate Ward		
Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Authority is sought to undertake public consultation on the Draft Rea Valley Urban Quarter Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (attached at Appendix 1).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Approves public consultation on the Draft Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD to be undertaken for a period of 8 weeks following a launch commencing 17th May 2019.

- 2.2 Notes that following the consultation, a further report will be produced for Cabinet to adopt the SPD as part of the City Council's planning framework.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter covers one of Birmingham's oldest neighbourhoods comprising parts of Digbeth, Southside, Cheapside and Highgate, renamed given the focus of the SPD, on the transformation of the River Rea to create a unique waterside development. The wider Southern Gateway area is identified within the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP)(2017) as the largest 'Area of Transformation' within Birmingham City Centre which includes Birmingham Smithfield and the area around the River Rea.
- 3.2 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD boundary area extends from the Bull Ring and City Centre Retail Core in the north-west. It is bounded by Digbeth High Street to the north-east, the B4100 Camp Hill to the south-east and Gooch Street to the south-west. The designation of the Smithfield, Enterprise Zone sites, and several sites on the periphery of the SPD boundary will bring added impetus to regenerate the area, boosting economic activity and supporting the delivery of the area's evolution.
- 3.3 The SPD provides a vision for developing and delivering a sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood, focused around an improved River Rea corridor that will offer new waterside development opportunities within the city centre. The River Rea sits deep below street level behind industrial buildings and derelict sites in a modest brick lined channel. The City Council has been working with the Environment Agency to develop proposals for the river channel to address flood risk and the future of the existing Victorian structures. Proposals to remodel the river channel, both within the SPD area and upstream, once complete will allow development opportunities to come forward in areas currently restricted by the risk of flooding.
- 3.4 The Rea Valley Urban Quarter area will offer an attractive, vibrant and well-connected place in the city centre. A place to live, work and invest. The vision for the SPD will be secured through the delivery of five Big Moves;
1. *Transformation of the River Rea* – opening up the watercourse to address flood risk, provide new green spaces and opportunities to increase biodiversity alongside sustainable development opportunities fronting the river;
 2. *Park Link* – forming part of a network of green routes and spaces, the Park Link will become a major pedestrian route linking Smithfield to Highgate Park;
 3. *St David's Place* – a vibrant mixed use area providing workspace and living in a high quality environment around the regenerated River Rea;
 4. *Cheapside* – local employment uses will be integrated alongside city centre living, making use of the wealth of industrial buildings and heritage in the area; and

5. *Highgate Park Neighbourhood* – creation of an improved, sustainable and connected neighbourhood, centred on a refurbished and extended Highgate Park.

3.5 The Big Moves are underpinned by three key development principles, these are central to the SPD in informing the creation of a distinctive and high quality urban environment;

- *Connectivity* – the SPD will provide a focus on improving the quality of the built environment and promoting travel by sustainable modes (walking / cycling / public transport). This will include the enhancement of existing streets and connections, the introduction of new links and legible routes, the introduction of new public transport services, and the reduction of parking and servicing that dominates the area;
- *Resilience* – the SPD sets out the need to cultivate a sustainable neighbourhood that is resilient to socio-economic and environmental challenges. This includes a water sensitive design approach to the existing flooding issues in the area, a focus on well-designed sustainable buildings, and green infrastructure across the area;
- *Design* – the SPD takes a place-making approach that focuses on delivering distinctive environments, health and wellbeing. This will be delivered through urban design that sets out desired building heights, street patterns and building design.

3.6 In order to enhance the character of the area, the SPD has identified several distinctive neighbourhoods that have a unique character, topography, natural features, street pattern and heritage assets. They are:

- Digbeth High Street Frontage;
- Cheapside;
- St David's Place;
- Highgate Park; and
- Moseley Street.

3.7 The SPD concludes by setting out the anticipated model of delivery for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter, including land acquisition, phasing, transport and a delivery plan.

3.8 The SPD will be consulted on publically from the 17th May until 12th July 2019. Following the consultation, responses will be reviewed and any revisions will be made before the final version is reported to Cabinet to approve adoption of the document. This will form part of the City Council's objective to guide investment and development decision-making within the boundary of the SPD area. The SPD will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 *Option 1 – Do nothing* - Should the Council decide against publishing the Draft SPD for consultation, there will be a lack of strategic policy for comprehensive development of the area and the River Rea corridor. This will limit the Council's ability to address challenges, redeem potential capital investment and deliver on the Council's agenda for growth.
- 4.2 *Option 2 – Rely on BDP policies* – As a statutory planning document the SPD would give greater clarity and assurances for delivery of development within the Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD area. Without this, there will be a lack of direction for planning decisions within the area.
- 4.3 *Recommend Proposal* – Preparation of the Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD and associated evidence base.

5 Consultation

5.1 Involved in development of SPD:

- Planning officers, City Design Team, Transport Policy, Housing, Landscape Practice and Birmingham Property Services at the City Council;
- Environment Agency, Severn Trent, WMCA and Homes England;

5.2 Already briefed – with follow-up consultation required:

- Education Services, Transportation, BMHT, at the City Council;
- Metro Alliance, Transport for West Midlands and University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust;
- The ward member for Bordesley and Highgate;

SEA Screening Report

- 5.3 A screening report has been drafted to consider whether the SPD should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) and is attached at Appendix 3. The report recommended that under the SEA directive there will not be any significant detrimental environmental impacts as a result of the SPD. The place making principles will support the delivery of significant environmental infrastructure, to improve the existing urban form, and support connectivity to other areas of the city.
- 5.4 The three statutory environmental bodies: The Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England have been consulted in order to confirm that a SEA is required or not for the Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD. This was done in February to March of this year and none of the statutory environmental bodies challenged the SEA screening conclusion.

5.5 External Consultation:

- External consultation will be carried out with local user groups, residents associations and businesses as well as local communities who will be informed;
- This will enable ideas and challenges to arise in order to guide investment and development decisions in the area.

5.6 The purpose of this report is to authorise public consultation over an 8-week period.

6 Risk Management

6.1 There are a number of risks associated with this decision. One risk is that the draft SPD will not have a clear or achievable vision. In order to mitigate this, the draft SPD has been produced in collaboration with key external partners, and several departments in the Council to ensure the vision is deliverable. The consultation on the draft allows for further refinement of the document before Cabinet adopts the SPD

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1 *Are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?*

7.1.1 The SPD will contribute towards the vision set out in the Council's Plan 2018 to 2022. It enables the delivery of Outcome 1, 'Birmingham is an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in' by opening up the River Rea to a mixture of uses and investment opportunities. The creation of a new sustainable neighbourhood contributes to Outcomes 3 and 4 to ensure that 'Birmingham is a fulfilling city to age well in' and 'a great city to live in' that is well-connected and supported by infrastructure.

7.1.2 As the predominant statutory planning document in Birmingham within the BDP the Southern Gateway forms a key 'Area of Transformation' within the city. It has therefore been prepared in context of the adopted policies within the BDP, complementing and expanding upon such.

7.2 *Financial Implications*

7.2.1 Preparation of the SPD utilises existing Inclusive Growth staff resources. It is envisaged that the total cost of consultation will be a maximum of £5,000. This includes printing and distribution of the SPD and publicity materials, as well as venue-associated costs. This will be funded through existing approved Inclusive Growth revenue budgets.

7.2.2 The SPD does not set out any financial commitments for the Council.

7.3 *Legal Implications*

7.3.1 The Council has general power of competency under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. S19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (S19) authorises the preparation of the SPDs which must be in accordance with S19. S19 enables the ability for the Council to undertake production to produce the SPD. The document will become a statutory document supplementary to the BDP; therefore it will be used to make planning decisions. The consultation will follow the principles set out in the Birmingham Statement of Community Involvement (2008).

7.4 *Public Sector Equality Duty*

7.4.1 An Equality Analysis screening has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 2. The initial assessment has not identified any specific impacts of the SPD will have on protected characteristics.

7.4.2 The approach to public consultation on the SPD will be informed by the community profiles for the identified areas and relevant organisations with an interest in equalities issues will be consulted. The Equality Analysis will be updated following a review of the consultation feedback and will inform the preparation of the final SPD.

7.5 *Procurement Implications (if required)*

7.5.1 No implications

7.6 *Human Resources Implications (if required)*

7.6.1 No implications

8 Background Documents

8.1 Adoption of the Birmingham Development Plan – Cabinet 13th December 2016

8.2 Appendices accompanying this report:

1. Draft Rea Valley Urban Quarter SPD (May 2019)
2. Equality Analysis (February 2019)
3. SEA Screening Document (February 2019)