

ETRURIA VALLEY ENTERPRISE AREA – DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

The Borough Council has been consulted by the City Council on a draft Supplementary Planning Document for the remaining undeveloped area of Etruria Valley. The draft Supplementary Planning Document covers an area of vacant, derelict and industrial brownfield land covering approximately 39 hectares (ha) (a plan of the site will be on display at the meeting). A mix of uses including employment, and housing are proposed together with a new highway access from the A500 Wolstanton junction. The draft Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared by the City Council with guidance from the Highways Authorities and input from landowners and other statutory consultees.

The draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out the planning strategy and development principles for the Etruria Valley site based on the planning policy framework set out in the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Core Spatial Strategy. Once formally adopted the Supplementary Planning Document will be considered as a material consideration when assessing future planning applications for the site.

For any comments that the Borough Council may have on the draft SPD to be taken into account, they have to be received by the City Council by no later than 17 September 2012.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council be informed that although the Borough Council raise no objections to the draft Supplementary Planning Document the Borough Council are unable to support the draft Supplementary Planning Document until clarification is made over the impact of the new A500 link on the wider road network in Newcastle Borough. It is also recommended that Stoke-on-Trent City Council clarify the rationale for promoting the site ahead of any other out of centre locations for office development and make it clear that they cannot promote a site ahead of other out of centre sites located in neighbouring authorities.

Reason for Recommendation

The draft Supplementary Planning Document does not contain the details of the wider impacts on the Borough's road networks required to fully judge that impact. The content of the SPD will be a material planning consideration when applications for the Etruria Valley are determined. It is therefore important that the City Council's position and rationale for their position of promoting the site ahead of any other out of centre locations for office development are clear and based on adopted planning policy.

Relevant Planning History

The northern section of the draft Supplementary Planning Document area (19.48ha) includes the former Burslem Sewage Works and two former pottery waste tips (Midwinter Tip and Burgess, Dorling and Leigh Tip). The southern section of the area (20ha) sits north of the previously developed sections of the Etruria Valley and Festival Park. This area was once the site of the former Corus rolling mill.

There are no current planning approvals relating to the area covered by the draft Supplementary Planning Document. Previous applications for park and ride proposals and outline employment uses on the site have been withdrawn or abandoned between 2006 and 2008.

Introduction

The Borough Council has been consulted by the City Council on a draft Supplementary Planning Document for the undeveloped section of the Etruria Valley as described in the planning history section of this report. The draft Supplementary Planning Document contains a Vision and Concept Plan which splits the site into four distinct zones:

- The Enterprise Area containing a mixture of B1a (Office) and B1b (research and development), B1c (Light industry), B2 (General industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution). (Major Use Sites B2 – B8: 7ha; Small and Medium Industry B1c, B2 & B8: 4ha; Business Park B1a, B1b: 2.12 ha).

- Buffer zone separating the employment and industrial uses with a mixed-use local centre containing retail (up to 500m²), restaurants and cafes (up to 300m²), a public house (up to 500m²), a hotel (60-80 bedrooms) and an office/enterprise hub (1000m²).
- Open space providing a buffer between the site and the A500 and the railway line.
- Residential area to the north of the site supporting the aims and objectives of the Middleport Masterplan (approximately 200 dwellings).

In order to serve the new development a new highway access will need to be created from the A500 Wolstanton junction; The SPD states that analysis of the existing access into Etruria Valley (Shelton Boulevard/Forge Lane) indicates it is insufficient to accommodate the expected level of development traffic and distribute it efficiently across a network that currently suffers from peak-time queues and delays. Furthermore the SPD states that the development of the Etruria Valley site in general and the A500 link in particular is being undertaken with the full co-operation of both the Highways Agency and Staffordshire County Council.

This report will focus on:

- (a) The impact of the proposed B1 (a) office and other town centre uses on Newcastle Borough.
- (b) The proposed use and access for the Coal Yard and the undeveloped section of the Centre 500 scheme. Although adjacent to the Etruria Valley area this area is within Newcastle Borough.
- (c) The impact of the proposed A500 access.

There are seven main points to consider:-

- (1) The interpretation of Core Spatial Strategy policy in regards to the location of office development
- (2) The sequential analysis of alternative sites as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- (3) The use of a Supplementary Planning Document to advance a site over other “out of centre” locations
- (4) The other “main town centre uses” proposed for the mixed use buffer zone area
- (5) The use of the Coal Yard and the reference made in the SPD
- (6) The access arrangements from the A500 located in Newcastle Borough
- (7) The impact on the traffic in Newcastle Borough resulting from a new access being created from the A500 to Festival Park and Burslem.

(1) Interpretation of Core Spatial Strategy Policy

There are several Core Spatial Strategy policies relevant to this Supplementary Planning Document:

Policy SP2 (Spatial Principles of Economic Development): Section 2 of this policy, together with its supporting text, outline that the identified strategic centres (the City Centre of Stoke-on-Trent (as defined by the Potteries Way Ring Road) and Newcastle Town Centre) should act as the main focus for large scale office development within the conurbation. Section 6 of *Policy SP1* similarly indicates that office development will be focussed towards the City Centre and Newcastle Town Centre, and that development in other centres should be of a nature and scale appropriate to their respective position and role within the hierarchy of centres. Etruria Valley is not a strategic centre or one of these “other centres”.

Policy ASP2 (Stoke-on-Trent Inner Urban Core Area Spatial Policy): Section 13 of this policy, together with its supporting text, identifies the south of Etruria Valley as being a major mixed use area for employment. Although office uses are not expressly excluded from this policy, the document does state that the Etruria Road Corridor and Festival Park / Heights will continue to complement the City Centre core.

Policy ASP1 (section 8) of the Core Spatial Strategy states that complementary city centre uses cannot reasonably be accommodated within the traditional City Centre core should be located along the Etruria Road corridor or western links of the Potteries Way provided they do not prejudice the sustained regeneration of that core.

Although Policy ASP2 identifies the south of Etruria Valley as being suitable for employment uses, the definition of employment generating uses makes it clear that office development should be considered separately from the other employment uses in the context of the “town centre first” policies. However the SPD makes it clear that any proposals for office development (or other main town centre uses) will need to be

subject to sequential analysis.

It should also be acknowledged that many of the strategic aims and spatial principles of the Core Spatial Strategy support the redevelopment of the Etruria Valley site for employment and residential uses. Furthermore the 2011 Joint Employment Land Review commissioned jointly between Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council concluded that the Etruria Valley site could offer a different office offer to that of the Central Business District of Hanley and that North Staffordshire needs to attract a positive strategy of offering a choice of versatile space complemented by good facilities and servicing infrastructure.

(2) The sequential analysis of alternative sites as required by National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has re-affirmed the former Planning Policy Statement 4 'town centres first' approach to the location of "main town centre uses" including offices. Paragraph 24 of the NPPF requires Local planning authorities to apply a sequential test for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan.

The draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) states that the identification of office floorspace in the Etruria Valley SPD area does not remove the need for a sequential site assessment/impact test at the planning application stage in accordance with the Core Spatial Strategy and the NPPF.

However the SPD does state that by identifying the area as an office location it advances the area over other out of centre locations.

(3) The use of a Supplementary Planning Document to advance a site over other out of centre locations

The NPPF defines Supplementary Planning Documents as being: *Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.*

Furthermore paragraph 53 of the NPPF states that '*supplementary planning documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development.*'

The Local Planning Regulations 2012 indicate that any policies contained within an SPD must not conflict with the approved development plan.

The draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) states that identifying the area as an office location advances the area over other out of centre locations, subject to the sequential assessment. However it is not clear whether or not a Supplementary Planning Document can be used to make this statement and if it can, should there be further explanation in the SPD as to why this is the case. Certainly Stoke-on-Trent City Council could not state that this location was the preferable out of centre location to out of centre sites in neighbouring authorities.

However the site is within the inner urban core, part of the regeneration of a large brownfield area and could represent a more sustainable location than other out of centre sites. If sites to locate office development cannot be found in or on the edge of Newcastle Town Centre or the City Centre, or in the Etruria Valley corridor then the proposed site could be preferable to other sites in Stoke-on-Trent.

(4) The other "main town centre uses" proposed for the mixed use buffer zone area

The other main town centre uses proposed include up to 500m² of retail, 300m² of restaurants and cafes, 500m² Public House and a 60-80 bedroom hotel. It will be necessary for these uses to be subject to a sequential test. At this point it is considered that the scale of the uses proposed would serve a local need and would be highly unlikely to be found to harm the vitality and viability of Newcastle Town Centre.

(5) The use of the Coal Yard and land to the south as referenced in the SPD

The coal yard site and undeveloped area of Centre 500 have been referred to in the draft Supplementary

Planning Document (SPD) as they are adjacent to the Etruria Valley site, although they are within the administrative boundary of Newcastle Borough. The SPD states that these sites are suitable for a non office employment uses although this would be subject to the approval of the Borough Council. The Employment Land Review scored the land south of the Coal Yard quite well for those uses and it is considered that those uses would be appropriate on this site. Indeed the wider development of the Etruria Valley site is likely to improve the chances of these sites being developed.

(6) The access arrangements from the A500 located in Newcastle Borough

The land required to gain access from the A500 into the Etruria Valley site has not been included in the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) area as it is within Newcastle Borough. However through Core Spatial Strategy ASP2 it was envisaged that a link from the A500 would need to be created to develop the Etruria Valley site. Furthermore the access would need to be included in any future planning application for the site and the County Council and the Highways Agency appear to be supportive of the scheme and the Wolstanton junction and stretch of the A500 that requires improvement are under their control.

(7) Traffic impact of the proposed new access from A500

Core Spatial Strategy Policy ASP2 states that a new link from the A500 to the City Centre would be required to develop the Etruria Valley site and indeed that it is a critical element. However what is not known by your officers I are the wider traffic impacts of the proposed new access from the A500. These are not discussed in great detail in the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However it is stated that: *'It is intended that the links between the A500, Shelton Boulevard and Festival Way would be open to all forms of transport, which would effectively create a new link between the A53 Etruria Road (and City Centre beyond) and the A500. This would inevitably attract some background traffic already on the highway network to divert through the site in order to avoid the congested Basford Roundabout and parts of the A53 Etruria Road. The impact of this has been analysed in detail and the proposed highway links and junctions have been designed to accommodate a robust estimate of traffic levels. One benefit of this new through-link would be a decrease in traffic passing through the Basford Roundabout, which will ease the pressure in part on the busy A53 between Hanley City Centre and Newcastle Town Centre.'*

It appears that the Highways teams have been involved in extensive traffic modelling and are satisfied that the levels of growth proposed can be accommodated on the highway network with certain improvements outlined in more detail in the SPD. However it is difficult to make further comment without specialist knowledge and it appears that Staffordshire County Council as the Highway Authority for this area have been involved in the preparation of the SPD and are willing to undertake the necessary works to highways under their control.

Overall Considerations

It is considered that Policy ASP2 supports the development of the Etruria Valley site for employment uses and where sequentially preferable sites cannot be found to locate office development, this site would represent a sustainable location which would assist in the regeneration of the Etruria Valley. Furthermore the redevelopment of this large brownfield site within the Inner Urban Area could benefit the wider conurbation providing new employment opportunities.

Although any office uses would need to undergo a sequential assessment, clearly it is envisaged that some office development will take place at Etruria Valley. The impact of out of centre office development on the vitality and viability of Newcastle Town Centre is difficult to prove, although past experience indicates that businesses have relocated from the Town Centre to Etruria Valley and this has increased the level of vacant office space within the Town Centre. However at this stage there are no firm proposals and so it is not clear whether or not there are sequentially preferable sites in Newcastle Borough. If at planning application stage it is considered that there are available, suitable and viable sites located within or on the edge of Newcastle Town Centre which could accommodate the proposed office development then representations could be made to the City Council by this Authority.

It is considered that the section in the SPD which identifies Etruria Valley as the preferred out of centre office location requires a little clarification. It is recommended that there is some further explanation as to why Etruria Valley is the favoured out of centre location in the City Council's area and that Etruria Valley is not advanced ahead of any sites in neighbouring authorities.

In terms of highways it is difficult to make an informed judgement on the impact of the Etruria Valley redevelopment without expert advice from Staffordshire County Council as the Highway Authority. However it appears that Staffordshire County Council has been involved in the preparation of the SPD and supports the proposals.

Background Papers

Planning Policy documents referred to

Date Report Prepared

24 August 2012