

5. CABINET REFERRALS

5.1 Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and
Scrutiny Committee – 22 November 2012

OS/244/12 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN
– Refers to Agenda Item 9.

The purpose of the report was to advise the recommended changes made to the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan (SPD) following a formal public consultation in August/September 2012.

Key points of discussion

Councillor McKay asked what was meant by 'Regeneration Challenges' and 'ecological status of the River'.

N Bateman replied that there was a list of challenges set in the Masterplan and one was specific to the River Gade. For example, part of the river ran through the Water Gardens which was a listed grade 2 garden.

J Doe added that the boundary of the Masterplan was Bury Mill to the Plough roundabout and therefore Gadebridge Park was outside of this plan. However work in the future could look at the hydrological issues there.

Councillor Anderson asked if the Plough roundabout and the Leighton Buzzard Road would be changed as part of these plans.

N Bateman explained that pedestrian access on the roundabout would be improved. There were some ideas around improving access between the Cotterells and Bridge Street.

J Doe added that the major change to the Leighton Buzzard Road would be new access from the Leighton Buzzard road to the new Morrison's food store and College planned for the current Civic Centre and College sites.

Councillor Harris asked if a fly-over was still a consideration for the Leighton Buzzard Road. He also asked if the access to the Moor End Road car park would change.

N Bateman replied that the Moor End Road issues had not yet resolved and there were no firm plans to change the access. The long term aspiration was to limit traffic on Waterhouse Street to buses and taxis.

Councillor Harris also asked if the plan would incorporate the Old Town and had any studies been carried out to show this plan would work.

N Bateman said the masterplan would address pedestrian and cycle connectivity. Connecting the shopping areas was more difficult. The town centre had a good daytime economy, whereas the Old Town had a better night time economy. There were potential options for the future.

J Doe added that the developers and investors say the town is too spaced out. Two special town workshops were held with stakeholders and businesses to help try and recognise links between the centre and the Old Town.

Councillor McKay referred to the option of a cycle route between the Cotterells and Leighton Buzzard Road. Residents had already expressed concerns about the number of accidents. He asked if a physical barrier would be considered.

N Bateman noted that the link would be at the main junction of the Leighton Buzzard Road that already exists. The crossing would be upgraded to a toucan crossing. This would be a Hertfordshire County Council scheme.

Members were encouraged to attend the Member briefing on Wednesday 28 November at 7.30pm at the Civic Centre which would show the next stages of the Marlowes Improvement Plan.

Outcome

The Strategic Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan Final Report.
2. Noted the amendments made to the draft document following public consultation.
3. Provided advice to Cabinet regarding the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan Final Report.

5.2 Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 November 2012

OS/242/12 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE – Refers to Agenda Item11.

J Doe introduced the report and explained that it followed an earlier report presented to committee. The council were required to set a draft charging schedule and therefore a Task & Finish Group was set up to investigate, which proved to be a successful group. As seen in the report, table 3.4 set out the proposed CIL charging rates, which had achieved a balance in terms of the CIL structure and getting the best financial outcome for the Borough.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Collins sought clarification of the charge for small retail units in Berkhamsted, as two tables in the report showed different figures. It was confirmed that the charge was 'Nil' for small retail units in Berkhamsted.

Councillor Collins asked how the charge of £250 for Berkhamsted residential development would be allocated.

J Doe explained that they would first need to set rates based on the viability of developments. The council will need to develop processes and governance arrangements for how funds would be allocated to deliver new infrastructure.

Councillor Harris suggested that a further recommendation be added for this committee, to recommend the report to Cabinet.

He continued to feedback to the committee the work the Task & Finish Group had undertaken. He noted that the charging schedule was chosen to be the more simple approach, reducing the risk of errors and confusion. The group decided that it was better to have a 'Nil' value for 'other' developments to encourage growth in employment. The proposals would now be consulted on and suggestions taken into consideration, these would then be consulted on

again before going to the planning inspector. It was envisaged to implement by March 2014.

Councillor Ayling asked how the rates had been arrived at. H Overhead explained that a viability assessment was done and a number of CIL levels were tested to see when it became viable for developers. The Task & Finish Group took a judgement on the rates and set an optimum level for Hemel Hempstead.

Councillor Ayling also noted that the differences in rates could be large. Were they intended to reduce development in Berkhamsted and increase it in Hemel Hempstead?

H Overhead said the rates were purely set on the results of the viability studies.

To conclude, Councillor Ayling asked what the charges per square metre referred to.

H Overhead replied that this was per square metre of the entire development. Councillor Douris added that it was per square metre of additional space.

Councillor Collins said the differences in house values in Berkhamsted and Tring did not mirror the proposed CIL charges.

H Overhead said she would need to refer to the viability study for the exact results. The aim was to keep the charging schedule simple and to keep the number of the zones at a minimum.

Councillor Douris suggested that table 3.4 is expanded for clarity when the report is presented to Cabinet.

Councillor Guest noted that the Task & Finish Group had recognised the balance needed to maximise income and encourage development.

Outcome

The Strategic Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the CIL rates for inclusion in the PDCS.
2. Noted the structure of the PDCS for public consultation.
3. Noted the timescales outlined in the report.
4. Noted the recommendation to review the Charging Schedule in 2016 unless market conditions are unchanged.
5. Recommend to Cabinet the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charges for inclusion in a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) for public consultation.