Executive Report
Report of Head of Planning Services
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Date: 6 September 2012

North Street Design and Development Brief
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Recommendation
That the Executive adopts, as part of the Local Plan, the North Street Design and Development Brief Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as shown at Appendix 1 and as amended by the points set out in paragraph 4.5 of this report.

Reason for Recommendation:
To facilitate a viable redevelopment of the site.

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks the adoption of the North Street Design and Development Brief SPD that will replace the Design and Development Brief for North Street, Commercial Road and Leapale Road from 2003. This SPD was prepared in liaison with officers across the Council and Surrey County Council and other key stakeholders before being subject to public consultation.

2 Strategic Priorities

2.1 The redevelopment of this centrally-located site for the uses set out within the brief will contribute to the strategic priorities of a dynamic economy - encouraging a vibrant business and knowledge based local economy, and sustainable local environment - preserving and enhancing a sustainable environment, both rural and urban, within Guildford borough.

3 Background

3.1 The North Street Design and Development Brief SPD replaces the Design and Development Brief for North Street, Commercial Road and Leapale Road adopted in 2003 which contains a number of references to the now superseded national and county planning policies and legislation. These are updated in the new brief, a copy of which is set out in Appendix 1.
3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to “allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites” and to “require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered” (paragraph 23 and 24 respectively)

3.3 The North Street site is key in meeting the identified needs (Retail and Leisure study 2011) for the town and has the potential to provide modern retail accommodation. The existing High Street contains a limited range of shop sizes and has seen the merger of some units to provide larger stores, for example WH Smith. The redevelopment of this part of North Street has the potential to meet the demand for larger retail units that will help retain the character and mix of shop sizes (including smaller units) on the High Street.

3.4 Three stakeholder workshops were organised at the Guildhall, High Street, Guildford on 23 May 2012. The event was attended by over 60 representatives from a wide range of interest groups. The comments received have been taken into consideration when developing the brief.

4 Preparation of the SPD

4.1 The draft SPD was the subject of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitat Regulation Assessment, and Equalities Impact Assessment screening to consider whether full assessments were needed, as required by relevant legislation. All screenings concluded that full assessments were not required.

4.2 Consultation with the public and interested parties took place between 2 July and 10 August 2012. Details of the consultation process, the detailed responses received and detailed officer responses to each issue raised by the consultees are set out in the consultation statement at Appendix 2.

4.3 29 responses were received from the public consultation and the main points raised include:
• general support for the redevelopment of the area
• support for the urban design analysis and that any scheme brought forward must consider and respond to the wider town centre
• concern raised on the amount of retail floor space being proposed
• concern around no provision of a bus facility within the site
• concern around car parking provision, vehicle accessibility through the site and traffic congestion
• the impact on the High Street and potential loss of trade
• the need for housing as part of a mixed use scheme
• the site area being increased but also that the BT telephone exchange is not included.
• how the public consultation has been undertaken in the lead up to the school holidays

4.4 These responses have been considered and, where appropriate, have been acknowledged in the final SPD.
4.5 The updated Brief has been published on the Council’s website prior to the Executive agenda. Since then additional amendments are required. It is proposed that additional wording is inserted at paragraphs 3.3 and 4.5 of the Brief as follows: ‘Any development would have to pay due regard to the movement strategy which will be incorporated into the final Town Centre Framework, such strategy having been developed from town centre transport modelling work undertaken by Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council’.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 No financial implications apply.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 The legislative requirements have been met through the Equalities Impact Assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, and in preparation of the SPD set out in Appendix 1. These requirements relate to the Equality Act 2010, Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012.

6.2 There is a risk of legal challenge during the three months following adoption.

7 Human Resource Implications

7.1 There are no human resource implications.

8 Conclusion

8.1 The Executive is invited to consider the comments received in response to the recent public consultation, as set out in the consultation statement at Appendix 2. It is also asked to adopt the North Street Design and Development Brief SPD, as shown at Appendix 1, as part of the new Local Plan.

9. Background Papers

- Guildford Borough Local Plan, Guildford Borough Council (2003)
- Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- Retail and Leisure study 2011.

10. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – North Street Design and Development Brief SPD
- Appendix 2 – Consultation Statement