



Chelmsford City Council Cabinet

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Chelmer Waterside Development Framework

Report by:

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development

Cabinet Member for Fairer Chelmsford

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Purpose

This report is seeking Cabinet approval of a Development Framework (Planning Guidance) for the sites collectively known as Chelmer Waterside. Those sites are formally allocated for development by the Chelmsford Local Plan – Strategic Growth Site Policy 1a refers.

The purpose of Planning Guidance is to provide site-specific direction for development sites. The document starts by setting a vision for Chelmer Waterside and provides guidance on design and infrastructure planning to achieve that vision.

The Framework will also assist the Council with related land matters including as part of the developer selection process and with land assembly and compulsory purchase.

A copy of the Chelmer Waterside Development Frameworks is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Options

1. To approve the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework
2. To approve the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework with amendments
3. Not to approve the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework

Preferred option and reasons

To approve the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework for the reasons stated:-

- i. The document demonstrates a policy-compliant design approach to development to meet the housing, community and infrastructure needs as identified by the Chelmsford Local Plan;
- ii. The document provides balanced guidance to ensure successful place-making;
- iii. The document expresses appropriate environmental safeguards; and
- iv. The document provides a strategy for enhancing canal and river usage which will benefit this development quarter and the wider City Centre.

Recommendation

The Cabinet approve the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework to confirm its status as Planning Guidance.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Chelmsford Local Plan was adopted on 27th May 2020. Strategic Growth Site Policy 1a of the Local Plan allocates 6 individual sites for residential-led development with an over-arching vision for creating a cohesive waterside quarter. These sites will provide over 1,100 new homes in Chelmsford City Centre, including affordable housing and non-residential uses which support waterside activity and the community.
- 1.2. As these sites are subject to varying ownerships, including a majority interest by Chelmsford City Council, and due to the complex nature of site constraints and infrastructure requirements, there is considered a need for supplementary guidance to describe the way in which the land at Chelmer Waterside should be developed.
- 1.3. The Chelmer Waterside Development Framework sets out a unifying approach to place-making across all of those allocated sites, identifying opportunities and constraints for each of the allocated sites and ensuring

that piecemeal development within those allocated parcels, which would be damaging to overall objectives of this regeneration, does not occur.

1.4. The Chelmer Waterside Development Framework has several core themes running through the document, including:

- environmental safeguards and balancing development needs with environmental betterment
- overcoming severe constraints to efficient use of land for development
- improving water-related function and setting
- meeting site-specific community needs as identified within the Chelmsford Local Plan
- integrated approach to infrastructure provision

1.5. The Development Framework provides guidance as follows:

- Context and site analysis
- How to apply land uses as required by the Chelmsford Local Plan
- How to integrate with key movement corridors
- Broad expectations for green/blue infrastructure
- Broad expectations for character of place
- Understanding of main infrastructure requirements and dependencies
- Broad expectations for relating development to infrastructure delivery and sequencing

2. Public Consultation

2.1 A consultation draft version of the Framework was subject to a 4-week consultation between February and March 2021. A total of 97 comments from individual members of the public, organisations and other consultees were received. A large proportion of those making representations support the regeneration of the area but had comments on specific elements of the proposals. A wide range of comments were made, but there were certain areas of the consultation draft Framework which received more comments or objections, which were as follows:

- Impact on Hill Road Allotments
- Loss or relocation of Chelmsford Canoe Club
- Desire to see improved function of and access to water

2.2 In response to the consultation responses the Framework has been amended to reduce the overall impact of development on the allotments, outline a strategy for bringing more allotment plots into active use and improving facilities on the allotments. The feasibility of the Canoe Club being able to remain situated on the same part of the river, albeit within new facilities and a consolidated site, has been explored within the document – this will inform future detailed planning of site CW1a. Desirable locations to access the water and to moor craft have been identified. The Framework

has also been revised to provide clearer guidance for developers on wider matters of local interest, such as sustainable development, sustainable travel, greening the development and content of open spaces.

- 2.3 A summary of consultation responses is included as Appendix 2.

3. How the Framework will be used

- 3.1. The Framework will have status as Planning Guidance. This means it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development sites allocated at Chelmer Waterside – as set out within Strategic Growth Site Policy 1a of the Chelmsford Local Plan (May 2020). This Framework will carry substantial weight in the consideration of future planning applications alongside policies of the Chelmsford Local Plan.
- 3.2. The Framework is not a masterplan but does set broad-level planning guidance to show how the respective development sites as allocated would interact with each other and be integrated with the existing neighbourhood and certain other design rationale. Developers would be expected to use the Framework when producing planning applications or their own masterplanning, as relevant.
- 3.3. The document illustrates the development parameters as set by the Local Plan to both guide and expedite delivery of high-quality new homes and place-making at Chelmer Waterside. The intention of producing Planning Guidance is to steer the development towards a higher quality of outcome than might otherwise be achieved and to highlight expectations for key infrastructure and other site-wide requirements as they apply to this site.
- 3.4. The document reflects the Council's Strategic Objectives as set out within "Our Chelmsford, Our Plan" (January 2020) which ensures that Chelmer Waterside is created as a fairer, safer, greener, healthier and more connected development quarter.
- 3.5. Land-based designations and other complex matters which represent constraints to development have been considered. The document provides reasonable recommendations for working with or addressing those matters to expedite successful development and not compromise place-making. Opportunities for creating a more integrated and appealing development are identified alongside the baseline site and context analysis to highlight these from the outset of the planning process.
- 3.6. A comprehensive approach to physical infrastructure planning is outlined. This is not to the exclusion of other infrastructure or works set out elsewhere in the Local Plan or which may be identified at the more detailed stages of planning, but this is to demonstrate the complex nature of development in this area and the need for a unified approach to funding and delivering the necessary key elements of infrastructure which will successfully integrate the development and ensure it works. Wider policy requirements, such as

affordable housing, are not contained within the Framework as these are clearly stipulated within the Local Plan.

- 3.7. In relation to certain key elements of infrastructure, such as the new vehicular bridge access from the south and the relocation of the gas pressure reduction equipment, this document identifies that the Council has progressed that work for the purposes of expediting delivery of housing in line with the Framework. This has been with funding secured from Homes England. Further, the Framework confirms that development must still pay for that infrastructure as it usually would as part of the planning process (s.106) as the Council has only secured advance-funding which must be recovered.

4. Programme (indicative)

- 4.1 Once approved, the Chelmer Waterside Development Framework will support the appointment of development partners to work with the Council as landowner and/or will support the disposal of Council-owned sites to a developer. This will take place early in 2022 once the supporting technical information is available.
- 4.2 Other land not in the Council's ownership will come forward independently.
- 4.3 Taylor Wimpey are already building 446 new homes at site CW1b in line with the Framework. They are due to be completed by the end of 2022.
- 4.4 The first of the remaining development sites is expected to come forward for detailed planning during 2022, with construction commencing in 2023.
- 4.5 The Framework will assist the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process by confirming the approach to development and ruling out piecemeal development. The CPO process is expected to be concluded during 2022.
- 4.6 Key infrastructure including the bridge access and gas pressure reduction compound are already being progressed.
- 4.7 The bridge access obtained planning permission in June this year and has now entered a period of technical design with construction due to commence in late 2022 and complete in 2023.
- 4.8 The gas pressure reduction compound has been designed in co-operation with Cadent Gas and a planning application will be submitted this year. A technical design stage will continue in the background and conclude in early 2022. Construction is programmed between Summer 2022 and 2023.
- 4.9 A new lock would sit alongside the weir to allow boats to navigate further into Chelmsford City Centre and provide a destination for the 14-mile stretch of navigable water from Heybridge Basin. Delivery of the lock is subject to funding. Future developments will be expected contribute towards that

objective. Further updates on the lock programme will be set out via separate reports.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Framework demonstrates how the requirements of the Local Plan can be delivered on this site.
- 5.2 The vision is sufficiently ambitious to achieve a high-quality development which is well related to its context. The concept masterplan layout and other content provide a sound framework to guide successful place-making and will support the planning application process.
- 5.3 The Chelmer Waterside Development Framework is presented to Cabinet with recommendation that it be approved.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 Chelmer Waterside Development Framework

Appendix 2 Summary of consultation responses

Background papers:

None

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional:

The implications that arise in relation to this decision are set out within the report. The Framework will be used for development management purposes in determining future planning decisions. It will also be used to support any necessary Compulsory Purchase Order required to support the proper planning of the area.

Financial:

The Framework identifies the Council's objectives for the site. The site financial viability has been considered during the production of the Chelmsford Local Plan (May 2020) and determination of priorities will be subject to negotiation at planning application stage. The Council when obtaining funding from Homes England accepted that a share of site proceeds or s.106 contribution up to the value of grant funding needs to be recovered from development at Chelmer Waterside, to be recycled on development within the city.

Potential impact on climate change and the environment:

New housing delivery can have a negative impact on climate and environmental change issues. Planning Policies, Building Regulations and Environmental Legislation ensure that new housing meets increasingly higher sustainability and environmental standards which will help mitigate this impact.

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030:

The new Local Plan and Making Places SPD will provide guidance to assist in reducing carbon emissions through development. This development will follow the published guidance.

Personnel:

None

Risk Management:

None

Equality and Diversity:

None. An Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Local Plan.

Health and Safety:

None

Digital:

None

Other:

None

Consultees:

CCC – Head of Property

CCC – Spatial Planning

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

This report takes into account the following policies and strategies of the City Council:

Chelmsford Local Plan, May 2020

Our Chelmsford, Our Plan, January 2020

Chelmsford Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan
