

**MINSTER QUARTER MASTERPLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - PLACE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise and consult with the Committee on the responses received following public consultation on the Draft Minster Quarter Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Minster Quarter lies to the north-west of the city centre. It is bounded by the inner ring road (St. Michael's Way) and Town Park to the west, and the Magistrate Court and police station to the north. The eastern limit is West Street, the former Crowtree Leisure Centre and the Bridges Shopping Centre, with the southern limit set at Chester Road. The majority of this Quarter falls within the Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area and houses a number of listed buildings of architectural and historic interest including the Minster and Sunderland Empire Theatre.
- 2.2 The planning policy context for the Masterplan is contained within the adopted UDP Alteration No. 2: Central Sunderland (2010). Alteration No.2 which it is commonly referred to as, sought to provide a clear strategy for Central Sunderland, to shape change positively and to realise the Council's aspirations for the City as a whole. The objective for Central Sunderland was/ is to create an area that is the economic heart of the City of Sunderland, bringing regeneration to, and enhancing the quality of life of, existing communities. Central Sunderland is to be the focal point for new investment and employment, education, leisure and tourism development. There are a number of relevant policies within Alteration No.2 which include:
- EC10A.1- The City Council will support the regeneration of Central Sunderland. Within the area the City Council will seek to maximise investment in employment, housing, leisure, tourism and education.
 - SA55B.2 The City Council will support the diversification of food and drink and cultural opportunities within the City Centre west area. Proposals for conversion, redevelopment and infill to provide the following uses:
 - A1 Shops
 - A3 Restaurants and Cafes
 - B1 Business
 - A2 Financial and Professional Services

D1 Non-Residential Institutions

D2 Assembly and Leisure.

- SA74A The City Council will support the diversification of licenses premises within the City Centre in order to create an evening economy for all groups

2.3 The Sunderland Central Area Urban Design Strategy (2008) sets out a vision for the type of place Sunderland wants to be, drawing together different development proposals and design guidance. The strategy sets out a bold vision for Sunderland and considers the Minster Quarter. The central area is considered an economic driver of investment and regeneration, a place that is valued by the whole community where people want to live, study, work and visit. Architectural and urban design excellence underpins the vision with an environment which has a distinctive character that draws on its rich heritage with great streets, beautiful squares and parks provide the setting for a lively and dynamic mix of uses which are safe and accessible to all.

3.0 Consultation on the Draft Minster Quarter Masterplan

3.1 Cabinet approved a draft Minster Quarter Masterplan for the purposes of consultation at its September 2016 meeting. The Masterplan was considered by this Committee on 11 October 2016. Subsequently, the document was subject to consultation between 15 November 2016 and 15 February 2017.

3.2 The formal consultation consisted of the following:-

- Notification letters sent to all individuals/ organisations/ bodies that the Council consider will be affected or interested in the SPD, or may be involved in the delivery of the SPD (see Annex 1 of Consultation Statement)
- The Council circulated a press release stating that the City Council is seeking the views and comments of the public and other interested parties on the draft SPD,
- A Press Notice was placed in the Sunderland Echo.
- The SPD and details of the consultation were posted on the Council's website. www.sunderland.gov.uk/minsterquarter
- A public exhibition presenting the main content of the draft SPD was available for public inspection and comment at the Sunderland Minster, High Street West Sunderland, SR1 3ET. Council officers were available to discuss the proposals on the following dates and times:
 - 24/11/16 - 9.00-13.00
 - 1/12/16 -11.00-15.00
 - 8/12/16-15.00-19.00
- Notification letters sent to all statutory consultees that the Council consider will be affected or interested in the SPD, or may be involved in the delivery of the SPD (see Annex 2 of Consultation Statement)

4.0 Key Consultation Issues and Changes to Masterplan

4.1 A total of 10 responses were received and although the majority of responses supported the proposals set out in the Minster Quarter

masterplan, it is possible to identify a number of key areas of concern amongst those consulted. These issues are dealt with in more detail below.

Opportunity for a new Museum

- 4.2 Several of the consultees have concerns with suggestion that the Magistrates Court and new shops on High Street West could be used for heritage centre, galleries and museums. It was also highlighted that for any museum proposal it will be essential that development fits in with the existing Museums and Heritage Service Vision Plan which has been agreed by the Council. Similarly any heritage centre would need to be co-ordinated with the Library Local Studies section and, indeed, the heritage centre in the Fire Station development. Furthermore, any speculative development which would reduce both the finance to support the existing museums and the exhibits they can display will be opposed.

Council Response

- 4.3 The concerns raised are fully acknowledged by the Council. The Masterplan, however, simply identifies the opportunity for such uses in the area rather than specifically proposing or stating a new museum will or should be developed. It is worth noting that a refurbishment scheme is currently being considered for Sunderland Museum and Library which will involve consulting and collaborating with a number of cultural partners and projects including those located in the Minster Quarter. This will allow opportunity to create a holistic city-wide offer for residents and visitors and one which is fully aligned and fits with the city's wider cultural agenda impacting positively on Sunderland's bid for UK City of Culture 2021. The newly established Sunderland Culture Limited also gives opportunity to secure additional funding and resource to support museum and heritage delivery and across a wide range of cultural services, however this can only be achieved by partners coming together to collaborate on projects, events and programmes which in turn demonstrates to funding bodies that an aligned vision for the city exists in respect of culture.

Former Crowtree Leisure Centre Site

- 4.4 The Civic Society expressed their view that the current proposal for *Area E Crowtree Phase 1* and *Area F Crowtree Public Realm* represents a sub-optimal use of the land and is contrary to the Council's adopted SPDs relating to Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area and the City Centre Design Guide. The society also highlight that the proposal for *Area F* states "should market conditions become favourable then further retail expansion fronting onto High Street West will be considered". However, the Society identify that it will be difficult to extend the retail offer onto High St West if the current planning approved Next scheme goes ahead. In relation to *Area G Crowtree Phase 2*, whilst the Society would like to see this area brought into productive use, and a better facade presented to the Town Park, they consider there to be insufficient information in the SPD to be able to evaluate the feasibility or otherwise of the current proposal.

Council Response

- 4.5 When preparing the proposals for *Area E Crowtree Phase 1* and *Area F Crowtree Public Realm*, the project team engaged with the developer of the Next scheme to ensure the design of their proposals fit with the overall vision, principles and proposals of the Masterplan. Whilst the recently approved planning application reflects the Masterplan, we recognise the masterplan should be able to 'bend and flex' to respond to changing circumstances. As such the Council have amended the Masterplan with rewording to keep options open for the overall development of one retail-led development in the event that the Next scheme does not go ahead. As for *Area G Crowtree Phase 2* the observation is noted, but it is not the purpose of Masterplan to investigate the technical detail and feasibility of the Crowtree building, however, the Masterplan has been amended to ensure there is a balance between the café overspill and retaining some of the tranquillity in Town Park.

Delivery of Development Sites

- 4.6 In relation to proposal *Areas 'B', 'D', 'E' and 'F'*, the Civic Society has requested a statement of intent regarding the management and co-ordination of development of these sites within the Masterplan.

Council Response

- 4.7 In relation to Areas E and F the Council hold the freehold of the sites and as such delivery can be controlled and coordinated by the Council. Area B is an unencumbered freehold and, therefore, as with the other sites it is within the Council's gift to when it will be brought forward for development.

Green Infrastructure

- 4.8 Natural England suggested that the Masterplan should consider making provision for Green Infrastructure (GI) within development, highlighting the social, environmental and economic benefits of urban green space.

Council Response

- 4.9 Whilst the Masterplan includes proposals for urban green space, it is acknowledged that there is scope to add further detail around the provision of Green Infrastructure (GI) and as such the Masterplan has been amended accordingly.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 An adopted Masterplan for the Minster Quarter will strengthen the council's ability to ensure that individual developments do not take place in isolation and will facilitate a co-ordinated approach to development in the area. The Masterplan SPD with the amendments proposed is in accordance with national, regional and local planning policies. The Masterplan SPD as agreed by Cabinet will be used by developers as a basis for preparing detailed

proposals for this area of the city and would be afforded weight as a material consideration when determining future planning applications.

6 Recommendation

6.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note and comment on the amendments made to the Draft Minster Quarter Masterplan in light of responses received during the public consultation on the document and other considerations;
- b) That the comments of the Committee be referred to the Cabinet when it considers the adoption of the amended Minster Quarter Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document.

7 Background Papers

- Amended copy of the Minster Quarter Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) attached.
- A copy of the Consultation Strategy with a schedule of representations received from statutory and formal stakeholders during consultation attached.